

# **The Communist Movement in the Arab World**

Tareq Y. Ismael

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# **The Communist Movement in the Arab World**

This book examines the communist movement in the Arab world from the time of the Russian Revolution until after the collapse of the Soviet Union. It traces the interaction of the world communist movement, under the aegis of the Communist International (Comintern) in Moscow, which was characterized by an uncritical acceptance of Marxism-Leninism, and local communists, who moved from initial dependence on Moscow to a position more adapted to local circumstances and sensitivities, which could be characterized as a distinctive “Arab communism”. It goes on to trace the impact of “Arab communism” on a range of issues in the region, including national liberation and social and economic transformation, arguing that the role of Arab communist parties was highly significant, and disproportionate to the relatively small numbers of communists in the countries concerned.

**Tareq Y. Ismael** is Professor of Political Science at the University of Calgary, Canada, President of the International Centre for Contemporary Middle East Studies at Eastern Mediterranean University, North Cyprus, and the Secretary-General of the International Association of Middle Eastern Studies. He is the author and editor of over twenty books on the Middle East, Iraq, and international studies, as well as four books on various communist and leftist movements throughout the Arab world, including a forthcoming volume on the Iraqi Communist Party.

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**This book is dedicated to the memory of  
Edward W. Said (1935–2003)**

**He was a scholar, a visionary, a gentleman,  
and a friend.**

**I shall miss him dearly . . .**



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# Preface

Although the specific experience of communist parties in the Arab world has varied from country to country, a certain common evolution underlies their individual histories. The key to this commonality lies in the two powerful, and often contradictory, forces which have shaped a distinctly “Arab” communism: the Soviet-dominated world communist movement, and cultural, economic, and political conditions in the Arab world.

With the exception of the Sudanese Communist Party, all the major communist parties in the Arab world were founded under the aegis of the Comintern. All looked to a world communist movement dominated by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) for political and ideological leadership and material support. With this acceptance of the Soviet orthodoxy came an uncritical acceptance of the canons of Soviet Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism and a concomitant failure to formulate independent social analyses of the specific conditions within the Arab world.

However, as Soviet support and control over Arab communist parties began to weaken following the death of Stalin, the Arab communist movement was forced to attune itself to local circumstances and sensitivities. It was by means of this process, through the interaction of forces of conformity and adaptation, that a distinctive Arab communist discourse was born. However, this does not mean that, at the movement’s inception, Arab communists were merely an appendage to the Soviet Union or the Comintern. Rather, communism in the Arab world developed as an approach to post-colonial liberation in which local issues interacted with a theoretical framework in an attempt to explain these Arab social, economic, and political realities. Nevertheless, despite the attempts by Arab communist parties to adapt to local issues, the harsh treatment and oppression by regional governments eventually led to a virtually complete dependence on the CPSU. As a result, local and regional issues, along with Marxist-Leninist theory, became secondary to Soviet global policy and the destinies of Arab communist parties became intertwined with the fortunes of the Soviet Union. Despite this dependence, however, they had a profound impact upon the political discourses in the region and all domestic political entities were forced to address the issues raised by the

communists. Consequently, the impact of the Arab communist movement on the region cannot be measured solely by memberships or participation in governments.

This book is an examination of the linkages between Marxist-Leninist theory as the Arab communists saw it, and the influence of their activities within the Arab world. It is not about Arab communism as interpreted by other scholars or theorists. Rather, it utilizes the literature and documents of the parties and participants themselves whenever possible. Essentially, I have gone to great pains to represent the problems and positions of the Arab communists in their own words, while at the same time attempting to consolidate the greater issues and themes into this one volume.

I would like to extend my appreciation to my research assistant, Mark Bízek, who worked so hard to format the manuscript and sometimes pressurize me into raising some issues that needed to be addressed. I also wish to acknowledge the contribution of the University of Calgary, Killam Resident Fellowship, and the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada for supporting this research in its initial stages, and to thank Judi Powell and Doreen Neville for their patience and skills in the struggle to bring me into the electronic age. However, as always, I hold sole responsibility for all of the opinions and information expressed in this book.

# 1 The heritage of Arab communist parties

A careful examination of the communist movement in the Arab world clearly reveals two major features. The first is an initial and relatively long-lasting rigorous adherence to a Soviet Marxist-Leninist ideological doctrine.<sup>1</sup> This adherence manifested itself in an uncritical acceptance of Soviet Marxism as expounded by the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and – until the 1960s – a failure to formulate an independent social analysis of the conditions within the Arab world without reference to the canons of Soviet Marxism. This was largely due to the influence of the Comintern, which assisted the development of all the region's communist parties, with the exception of Sudan. Indeed, the history of the Arab communist movement can be seen as one of gradual, and until the very end, just partial emergence from the penumbra of Soviet ideological influence into a movement which, nevertheless, has had a fundamental impact on the political discourse of the Arab world.

The second feature of the communist parties' existence has been their superior party organization when compared to other indigenous Arab political parties. The communists, particularly during the 1930s and 1940s, were able to produce better, and more regular, clandestine publications, had better contacts than other parties in the nascent labor movement (especially in Egypt),<sup>2</sup> often had sympathizers among teachers, civil servants, university students, and even within army and police circles,<sup>3</sup> and were generally more resilient in the face of concerted government repression than the other parties. All of this constituted a considerable long-term political advantage. In turn, much of the Arab communists' organizational strategy can be traced to the Soviet Union, which provided both an organizational model (Lenin's concept of a revolutionary party), and much of the material, political, and ideological support for communist activity in the Arab world.<sup>4</sup> As the Secretary General of the Palestine Communist Party, Bashir Barghouti, admitted, "The organizational forms that we had were taken from the Soviets. However, not all Marxists accepted the Bolsheviks' type of organization. It is enough to mention Rosa Luxemburg, who stressed the necessity for democracy in the party and society."<sup>5</sup> In fact, after the initial successes, the strict and bureaucratic organizational model, as well as the

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lack of openness, and internal democracy, became a heavy burden for the communist movement in the region, causing the stifling of its leadership and an increasing political stagnation.<sup>6</sup>

The Arab communists' ideological and organizational inheritance, and their dependence on the USSR were manifest in their relationship with popular grass-roots movements throughout the Arab world. From its initiation in the early 1920s, this relationship was characterized by the communists' inability to adapt Marxist-Leninist ideology to Arab societies and to traditional Arab cultural norms and traditions. Not only were communist proponents antagonistic to nationalist sentiment, they were generally stridently anti-religious in their propaganda, and militantly anti-Western and pro-Soviet, and, owing to the minuscule size and political underdevelopment of the trade union movement, they were heavily dependent on support from the Soviet Union, *ab initio*. Unions first emerged in Egypt during the early 1920s, and the communist party did succeed in wielding some influence within them. However, with British support, the traditional Egyptian bourgeoisie eventually suppressed the unions. Later, communist parties began to develop liaisons with trade unions throughout the Arab world – in Lebanon during the 1930s, in Palestine in the 1940s, in Iraq in the 1930s (and more visibly after the 1958 revolution), and in Sudan in the 1950s. Throughout this period, the communist parties remained heavily dependent upon Soviet support. The burden of pursuing modern techniques of political persuasion, e.g. public demonstrations, publishing houses and newspapers, coupled with the limitations and lack of resources imposed by a clandestine existence and suppression were, by and large, the main reasons for the continued dependence of Arab communists on Soviet material and political support. Furthermore, the USSR, especially under Stalin, was often eager to maintain such a situation of dependence, and hence dominance, over foreign communist parties.

The ideological and organizational inheritance of the various Arab communist movements, from Soviet revolutionary and post-revolutionary experience, is of fundamental importance in their political evolution. The Arab world first encountered Marxism, though only on an intellectual level, at the end of the nineteenth century. In Europe, socialist ideas had been generated by, and later acted upon, as a result of the immediate social pressures of rapid industrialization. Despite the fact that the objective conditions of industrialization did not exist in the Arab world, capitalism and imperialism were inducing similarly rapid social change. Early (pre-Soviet) Arab Marxists were enchanted by the works of Marx and Engels as models for social change that challenged the imperialist model. However, the conditions of the Middle East were of a complexity unaddressed within the traditional Marxist model. Middle Eastern capitalism was only incipient, the national bourgeoisie was too weak to accumulate significant amounts of capital, and merely acted as a comprador for Western imperialist interests, semi-feudal production relationships still prevailed in

the economy, and a class-conscious proletariat was almost non-existent, having very limited ties to the majority of the peasantry. Thus, there was an enormous gulf between the object of Marxist analysis – the evolution of capitalism – and the socio-economic conditions of Arab society. Nevertheless, a disdain for foreign capitalist domination and desire for a socialist society by Marxist supporters provided both a challenge to foreign capitalist domination, and an alternative path to development.

### **Basic principles of the Leninist tradition**

Marx and Engels wrote relatively little about the unique problems of the Middle East. What they did write focused mainly on Turkey and the foreign policy implications of the crumbling Ottoman Empire, which Engels equated with the “rotting carcass of a dead horse.”<sup>7</sup> The reasons for this neglect are many and varied but chief among them was the belief that the Middle East, and the Arab territories in particular, contained very little, if any, revolutionary potential. As E.H. Carr observed, it most likely did not occur to Marx and Engels that such a backward region of the world could in any way contribute to the overthrow of capitalism.<sup>8</sup> For both, the dominant characteristic of the Arab world was a backwardness rooted in colonial domination and perpetuated by oppressive tradition. Of all Arab territory, only Palestine and the Christian valleys of Lebanon were deemed to be worthy of lengthy consideration.<sup>9</sup> Egypt was considered “the only vital element in the Ottoman Empire.”<sup>10</sup>

Though not a topic of great concern to Marx and Engels, the material they did produce concerning the region is interesting, not only for its analysis of the social and economic conditions of the region but also in its disdain for the people. Simply stated, the objective conditions of Arab society worked against the development of any mode of production other than the Asiatic mode, which was the embodiment of underdevelopment and backwardness. According to Marx, no progress whatsoever could develop from the Asiatic mode of production, and Western intervention was the only possible way out of the impasse. The entrenched Ottoman presence throughout the Arab world that Marx perceived as “the effectual war against European progress”<sup>11</sup> was therefore considered a negative factor, halting the prospect for future development in the area. Equally serious, however, were the bounds placed on Arab development by the influence of tradition and, much more importantly, Islam, whose followers Marx and Engels considered “fanatics.”<sup>12</sup> These roadblocks were viewed as preventing any kind of European style of progress in the Arab world. In the eyes of Marx and Engels, Arabs, largely because of their tribal traditions and nomadic lifestyle, were destined to remain as barbarians.<sup>13</sup>

In the final analysis, one can accurately say that the greatest flaw of Marx and Engels in their analysis of the Middle East was the “extent to which they inherited virtually *en bloc* a traditional European discourse on Asia.

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... It can even be said that Marx and Engels regressed behind their ancestors in the tradition of European reflections on Asia."<sup>14</sup> Thus, though these were men of an ideological school, completely at odds with the dominant traditions in European societies, they were not men who could escape the traditional Eurocentric view that the root of most of the problems in Asia was simply that Asians were not European. Despite this ethnocentrism, however, the influence of Marxist thinking on the Middle East was strong, and the views of Marx and Engels toward Arabs and the Arab world did not obstruct the appeal of Marxism for some Arab intellectuals.<sup>15</sup>

Early Arab Marxists adopted and transmitted to their successors Marx and Engels' devaluation of nationalism, per se, as an effective or progressive social force. Nationalism was, in the orthodox Marxist view, an expression of the cultural superstructure of a capitalist society, once the means of production had attained a certain level of development, and the antagonism between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie had matured. However, while Marx recognized the historically progressive qualities of national liberation movements (such as the Irish proletariat against the English bourgeoisie or the Poles against the Russians), he argued that each movement had to be analyzed with regard to its contribution to the process of world revolution, recognizing that not all movements had such a progressive nature. Marx's familiar theses on the eventual disappearance of national antagonisms and even national diversity under socialism in the *Communist Manifesto*, *The German Ideology*, and elsewhere, scarcely need elaboration. The classical Marxist attitude toward nationalism is, therefore, contingent on the bearing that a given nationalist movement has on the international class struggle, with the understanding that socialism will witness the final annihilation of national differences. This devaluation of nationalism presented a profound epistemological obstacle to the development of the communist movement in the Arab world.

Lenin, following the Russian Revolution, also left a profound mark on the thinking of Arab communists in his adaptation of Marxism. Until the 1980s most communist parties in the Arab world were avowedly Marxist-Leninist in their ideological orientation. It was the adoption of Lenin's theses that transformed Middle Eastern Marxists into political groupings actively seeking to influence the course of political developments in their respective countries. Five such theses were particularly important in the development of an Arab communist movement. The first was Lenin's elaboration of imperialism as the final stage of capitalism, characterized by: the further concentration and centralization of capital in fewer and fewer hands; the creation of a financial oligarchy in the metropolises through interlocking bank and corporate directorships; the export of capital to countries in which the reserve army of labour is large, labour prices are low, the organic composition of capital is low, the rates of exploitation and profit are high, and the market is relatively unsaturated by manufactured commodities; the formation of international capitalist monopolies with liaisons in the exploited

countries that are capable of eliciting the military, political, economic, and diplomatic support of the metropole; and, finally, the division of the world market among the leading capitalist powers.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, Lenin maintained that imperialism was characterized by uneven capitalist development. Its proceeds could also be used to placate workers in the rich imperialist nations, though countries such as Russia, in which capitalism was only partially developed, represented weak links, vulnerable to revolution. In the post-World War II era, with the dismantling of colonial empires, Lenin's theory of imperialism appeared remarkably durable, undergoing minor adaptations however, such as the view that imperialist domination could continue after a colonial nation had attained independence, and adapted to new conditions needed to account for the nature of imperialist domination in the post-colonial world (neo-colonialism). On the whole though, Lenin's thesis of imperialism remained a cornerstone of Marxist-Leninist ideology throughout the Arab world.

The second thesis accepted by the Arab communist movements was Lenin, Engels and Marx's proposition that the relationship between the economic base of society (relationship of the means of production) and its superstructure (political forms, religions, traditions, etc.) is dialectical, not mechanical. Because of this, Lenin argued that political action by a communist party could, in fact, bring about changes in the relations of production by heightening the class struggle between the oppressed and oppressing classes. Such a revolutionary party would be composed of dedicated, professional revolutionaries whose organization would be characterized by rigid discipline, secrecy, and universal adherence to adopted policy (democratic centralism). Further, the party would be guided by Marxist-Leninist analysis, would utilize both legal and illegal actions, and would engage in mass agitation and propaganda (particularly the use of revolutionary mass media) designed to raise proletarian class consciousness and bolster mass political organization. Hence, it would prepare the way for the successful socialist revolution. In so doing, the party would be acting as a revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat (and their peasant allies), rather than merely relying on revolution through spontaneous class action.<sup>17</sup>

The third thesis of significance in the development of the Arab communist movement was Lenin's advocacy of tactical alliances with bourgeois democratic movements in colonial and semi-colonial areas. The Marxist-Leninist position held that such alliances should only be entertained when and where the autonomy and integrity of the communist party was maintained: "We . . . should and will support bourgeois-liberation movements in the colonies, only when they are genuinely revolutionary, and when their exponents do not hinder our work of educating and organizing, in a revolutionary spirit, the peasantry and the masses of the exploited."<sup>18</sup> Leninist emphasis on the common (anti-imperialist) front also found a receptive audience among the Arab communists, with almost every party resorting to the common front strategy at one time or another.



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Such advocacy of an anti-imperialist common front with bourgeois elements met, however, with resistance from Indian communist, M.N. Roy, when the proposal was put before the Second Congress of the Comintern in 1921. It was, however, a position entirely consonant with Lenin's emphasis on the use of tactical alliances, and concessions within the overall strategy of revolutionary struggle.<sup>19</sup> It was Lenin's understanding that the communist party would revert to opposition strategy once the national bourgeoisie had expelled the foreigners and established their own rule.

The Arab communist parties, from their inception, wholeheartedly embraced these three basic theses of Leninism. Lenin's model of imperialism, for example, has served as one of the conceptual underpinnings of social and political analysis by Arab communists for more than four decades and had widespread popular appeal throughout the Arab world during the 1940s and 1950s, when it was adopted by other parties with a nationalist Arab appeal. The Arab communist party organization is similarly based on the Leninist model and its accompanying view of society.

The fourth thesis was based on Lenin's proposition that countries in which capitalism was immature, weak, and structurally distorted could, under certain circumstances and with the help and guidance of the proletariat of the more advanced industrial countries, progress more rapidly to socialism by skipping the necessary requirement of full capitalist development.<sup>20</sup> They could do this under the aegis of a highly class-conscious revolutionary party, which could lay the foundations for socialism from above, and check reactionary tendencies from bourgeois and feudal groups. Lenin believed that the international communist movement in general, and the Soviet Union in particular, could play an important role in such a transformation:

If the victorious revolutionary proletariat conducts systematic propaganda among them, and the Soviet governments come to their aid with all the means at their disposal – in that event it [would] be mistaken to assume that the backward peoples must inevitably go through the capitalist stage of development.<sup>21</sup>

This contention (and Soviet experience) also led Lenin to place increased emphasis on the revolutionary role of the "toilers" (proletariat *and* peasantry) rather than on the industrial proletariat per se. Under the pressure of the concrete situation, and as a tactical necessity for the surrounded Bolsheviks who were facing the defeat of the revolutionary forces in Europe, Lenin, at least, partly revised the previously accepted thesis of historical materialism, that all societies had to pass through capitalism and its attendant political trappings, before reaching socialism. This revision represented a major change from his earlier (pre-revolutionary) views, and set the Bolsheviks apart from the Mensheviks, Legal Marxists in Russia, and the

Kautskyites in Western Europe, and opened for the Bolsheviks some new previously untapped prospects for political propaganda and maneuver.

The Arab communist position with regard to this thesis – the question of the transition to socialism – proved to be more problematic than their adoption of the first three. Until their discovery of the ‘non-capitalist road to socialism’ in the late 1950s, the statements and programmes of Arab communist parties seemed to reflect an adherence to a classical Marxist view that adhered to the necessity of passing through a mature capitalist stage of development, en route to socialism. This view could be found in the pre-revolutionary writings of Lenin who, for example in 1912, had derided any notion of China’s ability to pass from feudalism to socialism without a long intervening period of capitalism.<sup>22</sup>

The Arab communist position on this issue, however, was not based on such writings. Instead, two other factors molded the movements’ views. The first was the Soviet position on the transition to socialism. Under Stalin, the process of historical development was simplified so as to posit a unilinear succession of stages, a schema within which capitalism was a necessary precursor to socialism.<sup>23</sup> Given Stalin’s ideological and political dominance over the Arab communist parties, it is not surprising that they uncritically accepted this view. The second factor was more tactical in nature. Arab communists who, as far as the vagaries of Soviet policy allowed, and who, most of the time, actively cooperated with national bourgeois elements in the struggle against Western imperialism, were often reluctant to antagonize such useful allies. As a result, the issue of socialist transformation was often deliberately obscured as the communists sought to portray themselves as moderate social reformists.

Lenin’s fifth theoretical contribution to Arab communists was his thesis on the right of nations to self-determination. For Lenin, the planting of at least some seeds of capitalist modes of production was necessary for the growth of both a bourgeoisie and a revolutionary proletariat. This had been accomplished historically only in sovereign states, not in colonies. Thus, Lenin believed that the revolutionary potential of Asia could be realized only when Asian nations emerged out from under the shadow of colonial domination, and achieved independence in the form of sovereign national states. Finally, an article by a prominent Moslem Bolshevik, M. Sultan-Galiev, entitled “The Social Revolution and the East,” published November 2, 1919 (see Appendix 6, p. 180), echoed Lenin and foreshadowed the future Comintern tactics in the 1920s and 1930s. According to Sultan-Galiev, only an alliance between the Western working class and the exploited peoples of the East would bring about a victory over capitalist domination. Further, Sultan-Galiev perceived a need for the overthrow of the national “clerical bourgeoisie” in the eastern states as they posed a threat to the socialist revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

## **The early ideological foundation**

The adherence of Arab communist parties to Soviet Marxist-Leninist ideological and organizational precepts, together with their dependence on Soviet material and political support, renders it necessary to trace their initial foundations in the context of political developments in the USSR. The October, 1917 Bolshevik revolution was initially enthusiastically welcomed by many people in the Middle East. After the October, 1917 revolution, the victorious Bolsheviks inherited a strong socio-economic base to build on and were able to add a new ideological dimension to it. The communist revolutionary appeal was, at that time, enthusiastically greeted by many Muslim and non-Muslim peoples of the Middle East and Asia, who saw in it a historic chance for the fulfillment of social and national aspirations which had long been suppressed by the domination of the Western powers. The Bolsheviks condemned their underhanded diplomacy toward the Muslim countries, and published a number of secret agreements from within the archives of Imperial Russia's Foreign Ministry, including the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which particularly compromised France and Britain among the Arab population of the Middle East. Going even further, the Soviet government's appeal of December 20, 1917, signed by Lenin himself, to "All the Working Muslims of Russia and the East" officially declared, "the Arabs, as well as all Muslims, had the right to be masters of their countries, and to decide their own destinies as they wished."<sup>24</sup> It continued:

Muslims of the East, Persians, Turks, Arabs and Hindus! All you in whose lives and property, in whose freedom and native land the rapacious European plunderers have for centuries traded! All you whose countries the robbers who began the war now desire to partition!

We declare that the secret treaties of the dethroned Tsar regarding the seizure of Constantinople, and which was confirmed by the deposed Kerensky, now are null and void. The Russian Republic and its government, the Council of People's Commissars, are against the seizure of foreign territories. Constantinople must remain in the hands of the Muslims.

We declare that the treaty for the partition of Persia is null and void. As soon as military operations cease, the armed forces will be withdrawn from Persia and the Persians will be guaranteed the right of free determination of their own destiny.

We declare that the treaty for the partition of Turkey, which was to deprive her of Armenia, is null and void. As soon as military operations cease, the Armenians will be guaranteed the right of free determination of their political destiny.<sup>25</sup>

On January 19, 1918, the Soviet government established a Commissariat for Muslim Affairs. A Central Bureau of Muslim Communist Organizations was set up in November, 1918 by a regional Muslim congress meeting in Moscow. In November, 1919, a Second Congress met in Moscow and passed a resolution calling for the establishment of communist parties throughout the Muslim world.<sup>26</sup> According to British Foreign Office reports, within a year of the establishment of the Comintern in March, 1919, Bolshevik propaganda and ideas began to appear in Palestine, and Jewish immigrants established the Socialist Workers' Party (*Mifletet Poalim Sozialistim*).<sup>27</sup> It was, in fact, this party that initiated the formation of communist parties in Syria and Lebanon and influenced the transformation of the Egyptian Socialist Party into the Egyptian Communist Party. In 1920 the Bolshevik government consequently refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the British-mandated rule in Iraq, Palestine, and Transjordan, and of France in Syria and Lebanon. The egalitarian Treaties of Friendship and Brotherhood – concluded in 1921 by Soviet Russia and the Muslim countries of Turkey, Afghanistan, and Iran – repudiated the very concept of the mandate system. Moreover, the USSR was the first country to establish full diplomatic relations with Hijaz (after 1932 the name was changed to Saudi Arabia) and in 1926 recognized an independent Yemen.<sup>28</sup> It is in this context that Arab communist groups and parties began emerging throughout the region:

- The Socialist Party of Egypt formed in 1921, elements of which formed the Egyptian Communist Party in 1922. In 1923, the Comintern recognized the Egyptian Communist Party.
- The Spartacus group was formed in Beirut in 1921; in 1924, the Communist Party of Syria and Lebanon (CPSL) was established. In 1928, the Comintern recognized it.
- The Palestine Communist Party (PCP) was established in 1923 and was officially recognized by the Comintern in 1924.
- In the Maghrib, in 1919, communist parties began as extensions of the French Communist Party.
- The Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) was organized in 1934.

Subsequently, the Third International issued a call to the Muslim peoples to attend a congress, to be convened at Baku on August 15, 1921, devoted to a discussion of their future. The announcement read:

Peasants of Mesopotamia! The English have declared your country independent, but 80,000 English troops are on your territory, plundering and killing you and violating your wives. . . . Peasants of Syria and Arabia! The English and French have promised you independence but now their troops have occupied your country, imposing upon you their own laws; and you, after liberating yourselves from the Turkish

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Sultan and Government, have now become the slaves of the Paris and London governments, the only difference from the Sultan being that they will keep a stronger hold on you and will plunder you more effectively.<sup>29</sup>

Only three Arabs, all of them nationalists, none of them communists, attended the Baku conference. Following the Baku congress, the Communist International issued “A Manifesto to the Peoples of the East” (see Appendix 1, pp. 124–132) decrying English subjugation and the oppression of the Arab people:

Peoples of the East! What has England done to Mesopotamia and Arabia? Without any ado, she declared these independent Muslim countries to be her own colonies, drove from the land the former owners, the Arabs, deprived them of the best fertile valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates, deprived them of the best pastures indispensable to subsistence, took away the richest oil resources of Mosul and Basra, thus depriving the Arabs of all means of subsistence, and counted on starvation to make them her slaves. What has England done to Palestine where, at first, to please the Anglo-Jewish capitalists, she drove the Arabs from their lands in order to transfer these lands to the Jewish settlers, and then in order to provide an outlet for the discontent of the Arabs, she turned them against the very Jewish settlements she had established, sowing discord, hostility, and resentment among the various tribes, weakening both sides, in order to rule and govern herself?

What has England done to Egypt, where the entire native population already for the eighth decade is sighing under the heavy yoke of the English capitalists, a yoke even heavier and more ruinous for the people than the past yoke of the Egyptian pharaohs, who with the labour of their slaves built the huge pyramids?

... the English capitalists are trying to seize Turkey and Persia, Mesopotamia and Arabia, Afghanistan and Egypt, in order to take away the land from the peasants in these countries, by buying for a mere trifle all the plots of those who are ruined and deeply in debt; out of these plots they purchased they intend to create huge estates and plantations, and to drive the landless Eastern peasants onto them as farm hands and slaves. In Turkey, Persia, and Mesopotamia they want, by means of cheap labour, with the unpaid hands of the hungry Turkish, Persian, and Arab poor, to construct factories and foundries, to build railroads, and to work the mines. They want by means of cheap production of factory products, to destroy native trades and millions of local craftsmen with whom the cities of the East are teeming, to throw them into the street, depriving them of work. By establishing huge firms, they want to ruin the small local merchants and to throw them likewise into the street, into the ranks of the proletariat who sell only their labour.<sup>30</sup>

Early Soviet initiatives in the Muslim world were a reflection of geopolitical reality, the proximity of the Middle East, and the longstanding tradition of Russian interests in the region, and would soon find a practical outcome in the foreign policy of the Soviet government. There was a personal element as well, as Fedor Aronovich Rothstein (1871–1953), who had been private secretary to Lenin after the Bolshevik revolution, and later became the first Soviet envoy to Teheran, had worked in Cairo for the English paper of the Nationalist Party (*al-Hizb al-Wantani*), *The Egyptian Standard*, at the turn of the century. Indeed, his socialist ideas had a great influence on the party and its leader, Mohammed Farid (1867–1919). In 1910, Rothstein published his seminal work on British imperialism in Egypt, *Egypt's Ruin: A Financial and Administrative Record*, and later became editor of the *Manchester Guardian* and co-editor of *Egypt*. Rothstein's significance lies in his connection to both Egypt and Lenin. When Lenin was in France and Switzerland, all his correspondence with the Bolshevik Party was sent via Egypt. In this way, he was able to evade Tsarist censorship. In fact, it is likely that Rothstein was the conveyor through which this correspondence was transmitted.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Rothstein continued to provide a direct link of personal involvement and connections between Lenin and Arab political figures.

Lenin did have direct personal contact with the Arab nationalist leaders, particularly those in Egypt and Syria, and he had a long personal correspondence with Ibrahim Hananu (1869–1935), who led the Syrian rebellion against the French in 1921–1922. He may also have known Egyptian nationalist leader, Mohammed Farid (1867–1919), from his days of exile in Geneva. According to Farid:

It was brought to my attention that Lenin, the head of the Russian government, issued a call for the liberation of Egypt and India. This news came to me through Prince Shakib Arsalan, directly from the Russian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. The call was published in all the neutral countries, but not here. For that reason, we found it necessary to thank Lenin by telegram for this attention.<sup>32</sup>

According to the distinguished historian, Yusuf Ibrahim Yazbak (1898–1982):

The leader Ibrahim Hananu informed me . . . that Lenin dispatched to him an officer from the Kafkas who knew Hananu years ago and worked with him in the service of the Ottoman empire in Aleppo. The officer carried with him a message from Lenin written in Turkish, offering to help the Syrian revolution . . . against the French occupation. When I asked the leader Hananu about the disposition of this message, he replied . . . there are several letters and not only one exchanged between me and the hero of the Bolsheviks . . . for the purpose

of igniting the flames of revolution on the French and English in Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Palestine and Egypt. Lenin was very sincere in what he offered. However, he wanted these revolutions to be by the Islamic nations . . . and that means we must rejoin Turkey and our relationship will return to what we were suffering from . . . I loved Lenin for what he did and told him that a lot of people in the Aleppo area will be frightened by the idea of a return to [working with] Turkey. The Arabs and all the Arab regions will not forget the tyranny of the [Ottoman] Unionists and the abuse and ridicule of their main segments. It would be illogical to expect an agreement and the return of relations.

Lenin replied in another letter expressing his surprise at my statements because he learned from the Turks that Prince Faisal bin Hussain had negotiated last year (1919) for a common action against the French in Syria and Turkey, but the Turks did not trust him. They considered him, his father, and his brothers British puppets. Ibrahim Hananu treated the correspondence of Lenin with great respect and appreciation.<sup>33</sup>

Assistance from Russian communists was welcomed, though not always accepted. According to Mohammed Ridha al-Shibibi (1886–1967), a participant of the 1921 Iraqi revolution, the Bolshevik government, through communist groups in Iran, offered the Iraqi revolution both moral and material assistance. However, the offer was ignored because of the suspicions of Bolshevik motives by the religious leadership of the revolution.<sup>34</sup>

The accusation of support from the Bolsheviks also became a potent weapon in discrediting Arab movements opposed to the status quo in the region. For example, during the 1919 Egyptian revolution against the British, official British reports attempted to link the leader of the Wafd Party, Saad Zaghlul (1858–1927), to the Soviet government, both in order to discredit him, and to legitimize their opposition to the Wafd.<sup>35</sup> While attending the peace conference in Paris, Zaghlul sent a letter to the central committee of the Wafd, which stated that accusations that the Wafd supported the Bolsheviks would “be beneficial to our enemies in alleging that the Egyptian [national] movement has contacts with the Bolshevik movement.”<sup>36</sup>

The Fourth Congress of the Comintern (Moscow, 1924) urged the creation of a politically conscious cadre in the “East” – including the Arab world – able to lead the progressive national movement against the colonial powers. Accordingly, representatives were dispatched to Palestine, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt during the 1920s and 1930s to propagate Marxist-Leninist ideas, recruit members, and send the most promising to Moscow for further training in the University of the Toilers of the East, established in Moscow in 1922. The indoctrination of party leadership in the 1920s and 1930s at the University of the Toilers of the East must be credited with inculcating these slogans. Among the graduates of this

institution were: Asim Flayeh, a member and (unofficially) the first General Secretary of the ICP; Yussif Salman Yussif (1901–1949; more commonly known by his party name “Fahd”), official founder and General Secretary of the ICP; Khaled Bakdash (1912–1995), General Secretary of the Communist Party of Syria (SCP); and Nikola Shawi (1912–1982), General Secretary of the Lebanese Communist Party (LCP).

With Stalin’s ascendancy in the mid-1920s, the Middle East became an important sphere of Comintern activities. In his tract, *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question* (January, 1913), Stalin advanced the idea that the national proletariat of a country could lead a nation into socialism without obliterating its peculiar national characteristics. National self-determination was inherently neither progressive nor regressive – that depended on its bearing on the international class struggle. Tactically, Stalin urged caution in propagating anti-religious ideas in Muslim areas, counsel to which Arab communists later paid scant heed.<sup>37</sup> The Sixth Congress of the Comintern (1928) adopted a document entitled *Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-Colonies*, which stated:

The toiling masses of the colonies struggling against imperialist slavery represent the most powerful auxiliary force of the Socialist World Revolution. . . . The revolutionary emancipatory movements of the colonies, ex-colonies, semi-colonies, and quasi-colonies, more and more rally around the banner of the Soviet Union, convincing themselves through bitter experience that there is no salvation for them except through alliance with the revolutionary proletariat and through the victory of the world proletarian movement over the forces of world imperialism.<sup>38</sup>

This document outlined basic strategies and became the basis for the Arab Communist Party’s programs for a quarter of a century. According to the thesis of the Sixth Congress,<sup>39</sup> the fundamental slogans, through which the Party must seek to win over the masses, were the following:

- 1 Overthrow of imperialist domination.
- 2 Confiscation of foreign enterprises and banks.
- 3 Unity of the country, with recognition of the right of each nationality to self-determination.
- 4 Overthrow of the power of the militarists and the Kuomintang.
- 5 Establishment of the power of soviets of workers’, peasants’, and soldiers’ representatives.
- 6 An eight-hour working day, increase of wages, assistance to the unemployed, and social insurance.
- 7 Confiscation of all lands of big landlords; land for the peasants and soldiers.



14 *The heritage of Arab communist parties*

- 8 The abolition of all governmental, militarist, and local taxes and levies; a single progressively-graduated income tax.
- 9 Alliance with the USSR and the world proletarian movement.

The bitter experience of the Chinese communists at the hands of the Kuomintang led the Sixth Congress in 1928 to alter the Comintern position regarding “common front” tactics, and the replacement of it by class against class tactics. Henceforth, any cooperation with bourgeois groups against imperialism in the colonial and semi-colonial countries was to be carried out with the utmost caution. “Bourgeois nationalism” was to be opposed, while communist parties were to maintain their autonomy and pursuit of revolutionary goals at all times.<sup>40</sup> The Sixth Congress also endorsed the notion that communist parties in the colonial world should work to obviate the need for a bourgeois-democratic stage of development and instead try to establish socialism directly. The Congress noted, “the removal of the excessively marked disproportion between the objective revolutionary situation and the weakness of the subjective factor . . . represents one of the most important and primary tasks facing the Communist International.”<sup>41</sup> This referred to the fact that the communist parties in the colonial world still lacked popular support, a large membership, and the ability to lead the national movement. Furthermore, the Arab communist parties, for their part, existed in a hostile social milieu. Arab societies were dominated by feudalistic tribal, military, and colonial authorities and semi-feudal means of production and economic relations still prevailed over much of the countryside. In addition, the Arab bourgeoisies in this era lacked the dynamism and vision to lead the masses in a national struggle of liberation against European domination. The Sixth Congress theses described the bourgeoisie accordingly:

The petit bourgeoisie in the colonial and semi-colonial countries plays a very important role. It consists of various strata, which in different periods of the national-revolutionary movement play very diverse roles.

The artisan, who is hit by the competition of foreign imported goods, is hostilely disposed towards imperialism. At the same time, he is interested in the unlimited exploitation of his journeymen and apprentices, and accordingly, he is hostilely disposed towards the class-conscious labour movement. At the same time, also, he usually suffers himself from the exploitation of trading and usury capital. The exceedingly ambiguous and hopeless position of this stratum of the petit bourgeoisie determines its vacillations, and it frequently falls under the influence of utopian reactionaries.

The small trader – both in town and village – is connected with village exploitation through usury and trade, and he clings to the old forms of exploitation in preference to the prospects of an expansion of the internal market. These strata, however, are not homogeneous.

The petit bourgeois intelligentsia, the students, and suchlike, are very frequently the most determined representatives, not only of the specific interests of the petit bourgeoisie, but also of the general objective interests of the entire national bourgeoisie, and, in the first period of the national movement, they often come out as the spokesmen of the nationalist struggle. Their role at the head of the movement is comparatively important. In general, they cannot act as representatives of peasant interests, for the very social strata from which they come are connected with landlordism.

The level of industrialization in the Arab world remained so low that the proletariat accounted for only a small fraction of the total population, and was characterized by a low degree of class consciousness. The labor movement was only beginning to be organized, and was encountering stiff opposition from mandate governments when it attempted to enter the political sphere. In short, the communist movement lacked strength, and its ideological appeal was too narrow to attract the masses. Consequently, party memberships rarely exceeded a few hundred anywhere in the Arab world at this time.

Just as in many other Third World countries, most followers of the nascent communist movement were frustrated members of the middle class, mostly Western-educated intelligentsia, with rather weak social roots and limited popular appeal. Despite many changes in the years to come, the peripheral character of the Arab communist movement, with the exception of its Sudanese and Jewish Palestinian components, would persist and have an indelible impact on its sociopolitical character and future development.<sup>42</sup>

In the Arab world, as in many other Third World countries, the political role and activism of the new intelligentsia was particularly important. Its development "meant the birth of a new locus of loyalty – nationalism."<sup>43</sup> Ambiguity and internal division, however, marked the intelligentsia's attitudes toward socio-economic issues. Under the conditions of a predominantly rural – and semi-feudal – economy, and its corresponding traditional society, they were often dependent upon or connected to large landowners sharing and supporting the landowners' interests. However, many in the intelligentsia joined the leftist movements for other reasons. For instance, in Iraq, the monarchy, by providing the intelligentsia with the education which "differentiated them more and more . . . from the unlettered masses, was giving them a middle class status without assuring them of a middle class income."<sup>44</sup> Similar situations became prevalent in the entire Middle East region. The striking contrast between exalted social status and self-perception, and economic reality inevitably led to recurring tensions and agitation. What was even more important in the Middle Eastern socio-political environment was that "Marxist theory, with all of its shortcomings was, at least in its trenchant class criticism, relevant" to dissatisfied intellectuals.<sup>45</sup> It provided people, who due to their professional training were able to think critically, with revealing explanations and the

promise of a bright future. The critical intellectuals were, however, only a small minority within the Arab population as a whole.

At the time of the Sixth Congress in 1928, the level of industrialization throughout the Arab world was still so low that the proletariat accounted for only a small fraction of the population. The labor movement was only beginning to organize, and was encountering strong opposition from mandate governments. The communist movement lacked vitality, as its ideological appeal was too narrow to attract the peasant masses.

## 2 The Soviet legacy

After the Seventh Congress of the Comintern (1935), ideology in the Soviet Union became an explicit tool of state policy. In effect, this represented the subordination of ideology to state interests. The change in the relationship between ideology and state in the Soviet Union had a profound impact on the development of Arab communist parties. This chapter examines this impact over the course of the twentieth century.

### **Arab communist parties under Stalin**

Under Stalin, the Soviet State conceived of the Arab communist parties primarily as a tool of Soviet foreign policy. Stalin was highly suspicious of genuinely popular and successful revolutionary groups, since such groups were correspondingly less reliant on Soviet assistance and, hence, less amenable to Soviet control. To counter the independence of Third World communists, Stalin insisted on rigid discipline within, and tight Soviet control of, foreign parties, despite the often-detrimental effect this had on their political appeal.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of both the popular front tactics which were promulgated at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern (1935), and the intensification of great power conflict in Europe, particularly the rise of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, the colonial question receded into the background. At the Congress, the Comintern re-emphasized the utility of the united front and communist parties were directed to renew alliances with national bourgeoisies against [international] imperialism.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, one slogan, which emerged from the Congress, was the statement that “the work for the creation of an anti-imperialist front is the main task of the communists.”<sup>3</sup> Arab parties followed the Congress’s instruction by forging tactical alliances with some of the same parties they had broken with following the Sixth Congress in 1928. This shift to align with the bourgeoisie was seen especially in Iraq, where the communist movement supported the military coup of 1936, and in Syria, where, between 1936 and 1945, the movement cooperated (and even offered to amalgamate) with al-Kutlah al-Wataniyah and other bourgeois parties.

The eruption of war between the USSR and Germany in 1941, the wartime alliance with the West, and the dissolution of the Communist International led the Soviet Union to hold in abeyance its commitment to support the Arab communist parties. As a result, Arab parties were generally left to their own resources. During this period, revolutionary rhetoric and activity by the Arab communists slowed considerably as they directed much of their attention toward building anti-fascist alliances and supporting the war effort. In Syria, for example, Khalid Bakdash set forth an exceedingly moderate social program during the election campaign of May, 1943:

The issue for us in our opinion is not the establishment of a socialist system in Lebanon or Syria. All that we demand and struggle for with our few members of parliament of both Syria and Lebanon is the introduction of some democratic reforms accepted by all as necessary. . . . we have not demanded, do not demand now, and do not even contemplate socializing national capital and industry. On the contrary, we wish that both national capital and industry should make progress. We only want the improvement of the living conditions of the national workers and democratic labour legislation to regulate labour relations between employers and employees. We promise the landowners that we shall not demand in Parliament the nationalization of their land or property. On the contrary, all we want is to help them by demanding irrigation, the mechanization of agriculture, and the importation of fertilizer. All we want of them is that they should pity the peasant, and that an effort should be made to help get the peasant out of his present state of poverty, illiteracy, and disease. We promise the big merchants that we shall not demand the confiscation of their trade, no matter how large it is, and we only want to put an end to speculation. We shall support the small merchants and demand a lightening of their burden of taxes.<sup>4</sup>

Because of such wartime restraint, 1941–1945 was a period of considerable indigenous communist expansion in the Arab world. The pre-eminent military role of the USSR in the war against Germany, the concomitant popularity of the Soviet Union, and newfound legality or semi-legality in many areas for Arab communist parties or communist-sponsored organizations all spurred communist recruitment.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, the war (and the industrial demand generated thereby) brought with it an expansion both of Arab trade unionism, and of communist links with the union movement.

However, with the end of World War II, the situation began to change. State repression against the communists reappeared or intensified – in 1946 in Iraq and Egypt, and in 1948 in Syria and Lebanon – becoming particularly acute after the Soviet Union's support for the partition of Palestine

and the creation of the state of Israel. The dissolution of wartime alliances and the onset of the Cold War saw the reassertion of Soviet control over Arab communist parties. In a series of speeches and addresses in 1947, Stalin and Andrei Zhdanov outlined the doctrine of rigid bipolarity. Arab communist parties were enjoined to sever popular front alliances with bourgeois national groups that had flourished during the war and reassert their independence and commitment to orthodox communist doctrines. Within the international sphere, the decisive criterion distinguishing the national progressive movement from the reactionary national bourgeoisie was to be the respective attitude of each group toward the Soviet Union and the West. Only wholehearted acceptance of the Soviet Union as leader of the world progressive movement could qualify a group for Moscow's approval and enable it to cooperate with the communists within the framework of a "progressive front". Neutralism was, in Stalin's eyes, tantamount to support for imperialism. His American adversaries, such as John Foster Dulles, viewed neutralism in the same light.

Khalid Bakdash, the most influential leader of the communist parties in the Arab world and secretary general of the Communist Party of Syria and Lebanon (CPSL), in his report to the plenary session of the Central Committee held in January, 1951, fully adopted the orthodox Stalinist line:

The principal orientation of our effort and activity must be [directed] toward isolating the [Arab] nationalist bourgeoisie and putting an end to its influence among the people. For this bourgeoisie, no matter how much the names of its parties may vary, uses its influence to deceive the people and turn it away from the revolutionary struggle; it works also for an understanding with imperialism.

As Lenin and Stalin teach us, the *principal force of the patriotic democratic revolution is the working class*, and its principal allies in our country are the peasants. Their principal allies abroad are the camps of peace, socialism and democracy led by the Soviet Union. . . . We must work constantly also to unmask groups and parties claiming to be 'socialist', such as the Arab Socialist Party, the Islamic Socialist Front, the Ba'ath [Resurrection] Party in Syria, and the Socialist Progressive Party of Jumblat, etc. in Lebanon . . . for through their seductive propaganda they constitute a danger to the growing democratic national movement against war and imperialism, feudalism, and exploitation. They try to exploit the increasing popular orientation toward socialism . . . they especially destroy [the effectiveness of our] slogans of "distribution of the lands of the feudalists and big landowners to the peasants," and they call for the buying-out of foreign companies . . . and the putting of these companies under the control of the reactionary feudalistic government which serves imperialism. This they call "nationalization," etc. They also try to prevent the growth of popular

sympathy for the world camp of peace and socialism led by the Soviet Union by calling for a so-called “third force” or “neutrality” between the two camps.<sup>6</sup>

Soviet dominance over Arab communist parties had severe and lasting implications for their development. The Soviet ideological line paid scant regard to objective conditions in the Arab world. When ideological pronouncements were made, they were subject to occasional shifts or even reversals because of the demands of Soviet realpolitik. This was most evident in the movements’ attitude toward bourgeois democratic and nationalist movements. The constant revision of party positions, prevented them from ever building a truly effective anti-imperialist front, and permanently damaged relations with many nationalist forces. In addition, deviant opinion was suppressed to maintain loyalty – a move that served to both fragment the movement and ensure its Stalinization.

The immediate post-war period also saw the successful conclusion of the communist revolution in China, which offered an alternative model of development. However, despite the insight that might be gained regarding the processes of revolution and socialist transformation in under-developed and agrarian nations, Arab communists paid scant heed to the Chinese experience. The only significant exception was a small faction of the Egyptian Marxist Organization, which adopted the Maoist version of Marxism-Leninism in 1949 and continued to expound it thereafter.

The Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) remained largely responsible for the general guidelines of the strategy and tactics of the Arab communist parties, even on matters bearing directly on Arab affairs. Nowhere is this truth more convincingly illustrated, or with such disastrous consequences, than in the development of Soviet policy with respect to the formation of the state of Israel. The Soviet Union favored the partition of Palestine and joined with the West, supporting the United Nations (UN) partition plan. The communist parties, despite fierce and popular opposition to partition in 1947–1948 in the Arab countries, supported the Soviet plan. When in the aftermath of 1948 it appeared that Western influence would predominate over the socialist tendencies in the Jewish national movement, the Soviet Union began to turn against Israel and the Arab communist parties followed suit. However, they continued to recognize the state of Israel and the fact of partition, a stand for which they earned the undying hostility of Arab nationalists. Only toward the end of the 1960s did Arab communist parties begin to question their earlier uncritical support of the Soviet position on Palestine – a position which had been and continued to be dictated by great power considerations. By then, however, it was too late as most of the damage to their cause, in the eyes of the Arab masses, had already been done.

### Arab communist parties after Stalin: 1950s and 1960s

Stalin's death in 1953 signaled the end of an era for the Arab communist parties. The death of Stalin coincided with the intensification of the process of decolonization and the concomitant growth of non-communist, socialist, and nationalist movements and governments. In the Arab world, this process brought with it the toppling of the "old order" in Egypt (1952), Syria (1954–1956), and Iraq (1958), and the launching of an armed struggle against colonial occupation in Algeria (1954), fundamentally transforming the social, political, and strategic character of the region. The Arab communists subsequently underwent a major transformation, which intensified greatly after the dissolution of the Cominform and the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in 1956. The Arab communist movement's transformation can be traced to at least four major developments that occurred in the immediate post-Stalin era: (1) the emergence of the Third World; (2) the growth of the non-communist Arab Left; (3) changes in Soviet foreign policy; and (4) the changing nature of the world communist movement.

The intensification of the anti-colonial, anti-imperialist struggle brought with it the emergence of significant non-communist socialist nationalistic groups such as Nasserism, Ba'athism, and the Algerian *Front de Liberation National* (FLN).<sup>7</sup> In their conceptions of socialism, such groups threatened to co-opt the Arab communists' political programs, and the latter's potential popular constituency. Moreover, with their nationalism, such groups stood in stark contrast to the internationalist, anti-nationalist Arab communists – and, as such, had far more popular appeal among the fervently nationalist Arab masses. Throughout the 1950s, Arab communist parties were challenged and weakened by both Ba'athist and Nasserite movements. They were condemned for their unproductive adherence to an ossified Stalinist dogma and to the Soviet developmental model at a time when the non-communist Arab left, by contrast, was questioning the relevance of Marxist analyses to the Arab world, warning against strategies of national liberation which supported cooperation with the nascent Arab bourgeoisie, and stressing that each Arab country had its own unique revolutionary potential.

Arab communists were also condemned by their fellow Arab leftists for opposition to Arab nationalism. In Syria, Bakdash and his party opposed the formation of the United Arab Republic (UAR) with Egypt in 1958 and went into exile rather than accept dissolution, when they were unsuccessful in their efforts. In Iraq, the ICP willingly allowed itself to be used by Prime Minister Qasim (1915–1963) as a counterweight to his nationalist opponents who favored unity with the UAR after Iraq's 1958 revolution. In Algeria, the Algerian Communist Party (ACP) favored the gradual integration of broad segments of the Algerian masses into the mainstream of French metropolitan life, i.e. the same policy of the French Communist Party with which it was affiliated until the eve of the 1954 revolution.



Indeed, the outbreak of that armed revolution took them by surprise. The Algerian Communist Party clung to its original theses for years afterward, gradually losing contact with the nationalist sentiments of the people. It was not until many years later, after Algerian independence in 1962, that the party admitted its decisive error in not casting its lot with the revolutionary forces from the very outset.

Gamel Abdul Nasser, the President of Egypt, faced with communist opposition to Arab unity in Syria and Iraq, labeled Arab communists: “[foreign] agents who neither believe in the liberty of their land or their nation, but only do the bidding of outsiders.”<sup>8</sup> In a similar vein, Michel Aflaq (1909–1989), a founder of the Ba‘ath, stated:

We consider the communist party to be destructive for two reasons. One, in its deceptive socialism, it promises the Arab nation the achievement of its basic needs, while its basic aim is to tie the destiny of the Arab people to another state – namely Russia. Two, in its anti-nationalist stance [i.e. its preoccupation with international issues], it negates the Arab nationalist thesis.<sup>9</sup>

### **Consequences of the communists’ anti-imperialist policy**

In independent Algeria, communists were suppressed and forcibly integrated into the FLN. In Iraq, the ICP supported Qasim against a 1963 Ba‘ath-led coup and, after Qasim’s fall, scores of important communists (including First Secretary Salam ‘Adil), were killed and thousands more imprisoned by the victorious nationalists.<sup>10</sup> Because of their stance on Arab issues, there was little public sympathy for them. As the LCP reported in 1968, opposition to nationalism in general, and to the UAR in particular, meant that “the party’s popularity in 1959, as well as all the alliances it succeeded in building during the period 1954–1959, were again destroyed because of the immature leftist (i.e. anti-nationalist) line.”<sup>11</sup>

After 1953, Soviet foreign policy became increasingly concerned with fostering good relations with the emergent Third World. The rigid bipolarity of the late Stalin era was thus replaced by pragmatism as the basis of Soviet diplomacy and the USSR pursued a course of active cooperation with moderately progressive regimes whose main redeeming feature was opposition to Western imperialism. With this change in policy also came a shift in the Soviet Union’s theoretical position as the nature and role of national liberation movements, national democracy, and the transition to socialism were all reassessed. Nowhere in the Arab world was this transformation more evident than with regard to Soviet–Egyptian relations. In 1952, the Egyptian revolution had been described in Soviet analyses as the work of a “reactionary officers’ group linked with the USA” that, after seizing power, had set in motion the “savage repression of the workers’ movement.”<sup>12</sup> By 1955, however, opposition to the Baghdad Pact, and

Egypt's obvious importance within both the Arab world and the growing non-aligned movement, spurred the USSR to forge close and friendly links with Nasser. The closeness of this relationship was indicated in the signing of numerous trade agreements, cultural exchanges, and Soviet approval of a momentous Czech–Egyptian arms deal. Furthermore, the Egyptian government, which had been described as “madly reactionary, terrorist, anti-democratic, [and] demagogic”<sup>13</sup> only a year earlier, was now recognized in Soviet statements as playing a progressive role in the Egyptian national liberation movement, and in the Arab struggle against imperialism.<sup>14</sup>

With Stalin's death, the Soviet Union's dominance over all international communist parties, including the Arab communist parties, relaxed significantly. Equally important, however, was the local communists' declining importance as tools of Soviet foreign policy. Until the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU (Moscow, 1956), Arab communist parties could usually count on the support of the Soviet government and CPSU for their activities, which were, after all, primarily directed against colonialist or anti-Soviet neo-colonialist regimes. After the Twentieth Congress, however, the USSR often paid little attention to the needs and conditions of Arab communists. Instead, pragmatic considerations such as state-to-state interests were generally allowed to determine the cordiality of Soviet relations with Arab regimes – relations to which Arab communist activities could be as much a hindrance as help. This, in turn, often placed the Arab parties in an awkward position. On the one hand, the Soviet Union maintained cordial relations with the government in question, while on the other hand, the government was often actively engaged in repressing the local communist party. The new pragmatism, apparent in Soviet policy, also made it difficult for Arab communists to provide justification for sudden shifts in Soviet policy dictated by tactical considerations – a situation which often proved embarrassing to the local parties concerned.

The fate of the Egyptian Communist Party illustrates this dilemma well. Egyptian communists were often suppressed by Nasser, who saw them as a domestic political threat due to their antagonism toward the UAR, and as an obstacle to unity with Iraq. After 1955, however, the USSR fostered strong relations with Egypt, and USSR support of the Egyptian communists waned. Although Khrushchev did denounce Nasser's suppression of communist activity before the CPSU Twenty-first Congress in 1959, he also stressed that “differences in ideological views must not interfere with the development of friendly relations [between the USSR and Egypt], and the business of a joint struggle against imperialism.”<sup>15</sup> Khrushchev also denied that Moscow had any responsibility for, or control over, communist parties outside the Soviet Union.<sup>16</sup> Six years later, the USSR looked on as the Egyptian Communist Party dissolved itself and entered Nasser's Arab Socialist Union (ASU). Indeed, some Soviet analysts even seemed willing at that time to ascribe to the ASU the role of Egypt's revolutionary “vanguard” – a title and task normally reserved for bona fide communist parties.<sup>17</sup>

The beginning of the Arab communist parties' post-Stalin ideological transformation came, as it did for many communist parties, with the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in February, 1956, when Nikita Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalinism knocked many of the Arab communists' ideological underpinnings out from under them. At that time, a number of Soviet analysts called for a fundamental reappraisal of communist theoretical formulations regarding the national liberation question in general and the Middle East in particular.<sup>18</sup> Major changes in the Soviet Union's theoretical position on Third World liberation as well as a shift in political focus were further manifested at the Twenty-first (1959) and Twenty-second (1961) Congresses of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), and at the 1960 Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties in Moscow. The latter was clearly the most significant event, as the conference brought together no less than 81 communist parties, including party representatives from Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Sudan, and Tunisia.<sup>19</sup> The theoretical pronouncements of the conference were:

- The doctrine of peaceful coexistence between the socialist and capitalist states was advanced, with the struggle between the two systems to be pursued through competitive rather than combative means.
- Neutralism and peaceful roads to national liberation and socialism were recognized as legitimate options for Third-World nations.
- The progressive role of a "broad national front" in the struggle for national liberation was emphasized. Such an alliance would include elements from all classes including the national bourgeoisie, or rather "all elements of the nation that are ready to fight for national independence and against imperialism."
- Emphasis was placed upon the "formation and consolidation of national-democratic states" in the Third World, especially independent states who were antagonistic to (Western) imperialism. Such states could progress to socialism without passing through a capitalist stage, along the "non-capitalist road to socialism."<sup>20</sup>

The 1960 Moscow Communist Parties' Conference called for the non-communist, developing countries to strive for "national democracy". According to the program adopted by this conference, a national democracy must fight against imperialism for its political and economic independence. It must also "reject dictatorial and despotic methods of government," and its people, enjoying "broad democratic rights and liberties," must be free to establish political parties and social organizations, to participate in shaping government policy, and work for agrarian reform and "other democratic and social changes". Non-capitalist development was recommended by the program as the best way to "abolish age-long backwardness, and improve living standards."<sup>21</sup>

Khrushchev, in a speech at the Moscow congress, emphasized the close relation between the national liberation movement and socialism. He argued: "The success of the national liberation movement depended to a vast extent on the victories of socialism, and in their turn strengthen the international positions of socialism in the struggle against imperialism."<sup>22</sup> A Soviet writer, Arzumanyan added: "National democracy is not yet socialism but the transitional stage to socialism."<sup>23</sup> The Soviet Union seemed to have had a long period of theoretical preparation for the Moscow program. As early as 1955, L.N. Vatolina, in an article appearing in issue number 5 of *Sovetskoye Vostokovedeniye*, affirmed the basic unity and purpose of "progressive" and "national liberation" movements. "The liberation struggle of the Arab countries," she argued, "fuses with the struggle of the whole of progressive humanity for peace, independence and democracy."<sup>24</sup>

The program adopted by the Twenty-second Congress of the CPSU reaffirmed the progressive nature of the national liberation movement in general. However, remarks with regard to the reactionary element in the nationalism on the oppressed nations deserve attention. The program declared:

The liberation movement of the awakened peoples is taking place in many countries under the banner of nationalism. Marxist-Leninists differentiate between the nationalism of oppressed nations and the nationalism of the oppressing nations. The nationalism of oppressed nations has a common democratic content aimed against oppression, and the Communists support it, considering it historically justified at a given stage. It expresses itself in the aspiration of oppressed peoples for liberation from imperialist oppression for national independence and national revival. At the same time the nationalism of an oppressing nation expresses the ideology and interests of the reactionary exploiting top level.<sup>25</sup>

Over the next few years, these theoretical formulations underwent further elaboration and development at numerous communist party conferences and seminars. Some changes were made, such as the formulation of the concept of "revolutionary democracy" to deal with the theoretical dilemma caused by the adoption of socialist programmes by non-communist governments (such as the UAR and Algeria). In essence, however, the revised doctrine enunciated in the first decade following Stalin's death became the ideological basis of Soviet policy toward the Third World for the next quarter of a century. This took place in the context of growing ideological pluralism within the communist movement. The success of the Chinese revolution and the "revisionist" regime in Yugoslavia finally offered Arab communists more choices than blindly following the Soviet model.

As has already been noted, Arab communists generally paid little attention to the practical or theoretical implications of the Chinese revolution. However, when the dispute between Moscow and Peking became more apparent after the Twentieth CPSU Party Congress, particularly in the 1960s, the vast majority of Arab communists supported the USSR over the Chinese, despite the fact that the Chinese position on issues such as Palestine and Arab nationalism, particularly after the 1967 Arab–Israeli war, was far closer to the grass-roots Arab nationalist view than was the ambiguous Soviet position. There were some minor exceptions to this general pattern of uninspired submission. The Egyptian Marxist Organization continued to expound Maoism, while the Party of Socialist Revolution (Hizb al-Thawra al-Ishtarakiyah) and the Arab Communist Party (al-Hizb al-Shiou'ie al-Arabi) were formed in August, 1964 and February, 1968 by pro-Chinese elements of the Lebanese and Syrian communist parties respectively. There was also a split within the Sudanese Communist Party in late 1964 and early 1965, culminating in the formation of the pro-Chinese Revolutionary Communist Party of the Sudan (al-Hizb al-Shiou'ie al-Sudani al-Thawrie). In addition, some observers reported a significant decline in recruitment by the established communist parties among students and workers as a result of dissatisfaction with their pro-Moscow orthodoxy.<sup>26</sup>

Nonetheless, none of the pro-Chinese splinter groups ever managed to attract a significant following. The Egyptian group was disbanded in 1965, while the Lebanese, Syrian, and Sudanese splinters withered away within a few years of their creation. At their May, 1967 meeting, the communist parties of the Arab world passed a strongly pro-Soviet/anti-Maoist Resolution on the Situation in the World Communist Movement. In this they stated:

During the past year, the communist parties of the Arab countries have come to know many new facts showing how Mao Tse-Tung's emissaries and hirelings carry on their subversive policy in the Arab world and how this policy links up in many respects with the imperialist plans in the Arab countries.

The Mao group is making feverish attempts to poison the relations of friendship, cooperation, and solidarity between the new Arab states and the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, and to undermine the relations between the Arab countries themselves. It concentrates on combating the communist parties of the Arab countries as it continues its fruitless attempts to split their ranks. It tries to foil efforts toward cooperation between revolutionary and progressive forces throughout the Arab world and in each particular Arab country, and makes futile attempts to strengthen adventurist trends in the Middle East, playing into the hands of the imperialists and of Israel.<sup>27</sup>

They also reaffirmed their adherence to “the principles of Marxism-Leninism and the general line of the world communist movement,” and vowed to “continue the fight against the splitting and subversive activity of the Mao Tse-tung group.”<sup>28</sup> The Sino-Soviet split, however, did provide the Arab movement with a small degree of leverage over the Soviet Union in ideological as well as policy disputes. Khalid Bakdash (1912–1995), for example, made overtures toward the Chinese in order to indicate the Syrian Communist Party’s displeasure with Soviet support of the UAR. Similarly, a radical wing of the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) accepted Chinese support in its fight with a pro-Soviet group over control of the party. The changing Soviet policy toward the UAR offers a good illustration of the relationship between Arab communists and the Soviets. Between 1955 and 1958, Soviet comments on Nasser’s regime were essentially positive. Nevertheless, the alliance between local communist parties and the anti-imperialist Arab nationalists (i.e. Nasserist and the Ba’ath Party) ceased to exist shortly after the formation of the United Arab Republic and the Iraqi revolution in 1958. Following these events, various Arab communist parties launched a series of attacks on the UAR. Communist leaders alleged that Arab nationalists had not only curtailed the struggle for radical social reforms, but had even neglected their responsibilities in the fight against imperialism. In June, 1959, Wasfi Midani of the Communist Party of Syria wrote that the UAR leaders had “established a regime of repression and terror in Syria and Egypt” and were “restoring anti-communism in the endeavour to conceal their anti-national and anti-democratic policy.” He condemned the UAR regime’s “savage repression against the Syrian people.” In the same year, Bakdash complained that the tension between the UAR and Iraq after the 1958 revolution marked an extremely difficult time for the Arab national liberation movement, and “for this the ruling circles of the UAR are wholly to blame.”<sup>29</sup> He further claimed that the UAR had ceased its anti-imperialist struggle and turned itself into a big financiers’ regime. The right wing, according to Bakdash, wanted to change the direction of national liberation movements by abandoning the progressive content of Arab nationalism.<sup>30</sup>

In his speech delivered at the Twenty-second Congress of the CPSU, Bakdash remarked: “Events have justified the policy (against the UAR) of our party, which has held for the last three years.”<sup>31</sup> He continued:

In the last three years the Syrian people has [sic] undergone great trials. Many hundreds of workers, peasants, students, intelligentsia and officers were thrown into prison or compelled to go into hiding and several hundreds perished. These have been unforgettable lessons for the whole Arab national liberation movement.<sup>32</sup>

In dealing with the sharp conflicts between the Arab communists and the UAR regime, the Soviet Union apparently took the side of the Arab

communists. In speaking to the CPSU congress, Khrushchev vigorously affirmed his support for the Arab communists. In his speech on March 16 that same year, Khrushchev went further to make disparaging references to the Arab nationalist cause itself, condemning manifestations of it as directed against “the interests of the working people.”<sup>33</sup> However, according to a *Mizan* observer, the Soviet condemnation of the UAR’s anti-communism was milder in tone: “The Middle East Communist Party Spokesmen – notably those of the UAR and Iraq – were vocal in proclaiming their own policies and criticizing those of their governments. This finds some echo in Soviet pronouncements, but loses much in the process.”<sup>34</sup>

Not until 1961 was the UAR regime referred to as a “dictatorship” in the Soviet press by the General Secretary of the Jordanian Communist Party (JCP), Fuad Nassar, whose article appeared in *Sovremenny Vostok*.<sup>35</sup> In the meantime, Khrushchev and Brezhnev called for “national friendship with the UAR,”<sup>36</sup> and a Soviet writer called for leaving “the settlement of ideological controversies to history.”<sup>37</sup> From 1964, the main trend of the communists’ comments on the UAR regime in both the Arab world and the Soviet Union once again became positive. The Soviet writer Mirskiy noticed, in an article which appeared in issue number 8, 1964, of *Kommunist*, that many of the officer patriots “were obliged to turn to Marxism or else spontaneously, given the conditions of their country’s development, put into practice what this doctrine recommends.”<sup>38</sup> The Resolution of the Central Committee of Jordan’s Communist Party echoed the same point in October, 1964:

In the UAR and the Algerian Republic, the revolution has gone beyond the bounds of political emancipation from imperialism and entered a new stage of its development, that of attaining complete economic independence and of effecting radical social changes which have put both these Arab countries on the road of non-capitalist development leading to socialism. Among the most important features contributing to this are the freedoms and rights, which the workers, peasants, progressive intellectuals, and other forces sincerely struggling for socialism have begun to enjoy.

The representatives of Arab communists, in their first meeting in December, 1964, followed the Soviets to acclaim that “The UAR will be able to forge ahead towards socialism” at this time.<sup>39</sup> The JCP called for the promotion of solidarity and cooperation with the UAR.<sup>40</sup> Following the Arab communists’ changing attitude toward the UAR, one can see a dialectical interaction in the relationship between the Soviet Union and the Arab communists. The Arab communists’ policies were greatly influenced by the Soviet Union, especially in the case of the change of attitude toward the UAR. In an article published in early 1964, Fuad Nassar was still talking about the “growing contradiction between the important economic changes which have taken place in the UAR and the continued adherence of the

ruling circles to their old reactionary ideological and political position.”<sup>41</sup> Only eight months later the JCP began calling for solidarity and cooperation with the already much more progressive UAR.

However, the Arab communists were not merely followers of the Soviet policy. According to the *Mizan* observation, the Soviet criticism on the UAR since 1959 seemed to be influenced by the opposition to the union of Syria and Egypt by the SCP.<sup>42</sup> The reserved Soviet criticism of the UAR regime after 1964 seems to indicate that the Soviets wanted to give a supportive response to the Arab communists’ initiatives in fighting against the despotic regime on the one hand, and try to keep the Arab communists’ polemic with the UAR regime within the limit set by the Soviets themselves on the other.

If indeed the Soviet Union had, for several years, certain reservations around its criticism of UAR policies, it seemed that, in 1964 and 1965, the Soviets had come to have few reservations in welcoming the policies pursued by the UAR. Although the main trend of the Arab communists was following the Soviet line in praising the UAR during this period, some Arab communists seemed far less certain in this regard. Most notably, Khalid Bakdash continued his opposition to Nasserism and the experiment in Syrian–Egyptian unity, even after the break-up of the UAR, despite ongoing Soviet support. Bakdash’s bold stance was an indication of some degree of independence of the Syrian Party vis-à-vis the Soviet policy line.

The dialectical interaction between the Soviet Union and the Arab communists seemed to be the consequence of the Soviet stand adopted in the Twenty-first Congress of the CPSU, which allowed the communist parties outside the Soviet Union to “work out their policies on the basis of the concrete conditions of the particular country.”<sup>43</sup> Taking a relatively independent stance on Arab issues also seemed to be a conscious choice of the Arab communist parties themselves. The “Communiqué of The First Meeting of the Representatives of the Communists of the Arab Countries” declared that it was

imperative for sincere revolutionaries to exert ever greater effort in the search for the best forms of cooperation, alliance, or unity with a view to joint action by all the revolutionary forces in organizational forms best suited both to the present stage in the development of the revolution and to the conditions, specific features and traditions of each Arab country.<sup>44</sup>

A certain distance between the official Soviet policy and the political options of the Arab communist parties also served Soviet state interests, creating a broader space for pragmatic deals with a number of Arab states which were considered to be useful allies in the Cold War, but which were often quite oppressive to the local communists. On the whole, however, basic practical and theoretical support and agreement with the post-Stalinist



CPSU was largely the basis of party policies for Arab communists, though there was also a movement toward theoretical formulations more in line with conditions in the Arab world. When, in September, 1964, various Arab communist parties held their first general conferences, their statements reflected recognition of the non-capitalist road to development and acceptance of the need for "an exchange of experience and the establishment of the closest relations of co-operation between progressive parties, organizations, and movements in the Arab world."<sup>45</sup> Similarly, a seminar on "Africa – National and Social Revolution," held in Cairo in October, 1966 under the auspices of *al-Tali'a* (Cairo) and the Czech journal *World Marxist Review*, saw Arab communist representatives discussing the problems encountered in African national liberation struggles as well as within the theoretical framework set forth at the 1960 Moscow conference, and the Twentieth, Twenty-first, and Twenty-second Congresses of the CPSU.<sup>46</sup> Then, in the 1968 general conference, the Arab communist parties significantly praised non-communist Arab regimes:

countries like Egypt and Syria marched toward a new path of development distinguished by a great blow to the remnants of feudalism and capitalism . . . and achieved great social and economic transformation, that could develop with the right subjective and objective conditions, to become the foundation of transformation of these countries to socialism according to the general Marxist-Leninist principles.<sup>47</sup>

Numerous examples of the Arab communists' general adherence to the new, post-Stalin, Soviet communist orthodoxy can be found. It is perhaps more instructive, however, to delineate issues wherein Arab communist dissension over theoretical issues can be detected. With the relaxation of Soviet dominance, Arab communist parties were forced to stand on their own feet. One effect of this was greater inter-party cooperation in the Arab world. This was manifested in the holding of annual Arab communist parties' general conferences after 1964. These conferences became the main form of expression of the Arab communists' growing adjustment to the Arab environment, and will be discussed later in more detail. A second effect of the Arab communist parties' increasing independence from Moscow was an increased willingness, on the part of Arab communists, to undertake theoretical criticism of previous party positions, and to innovatively experiment from a truly Arab perspective. Such innovation should not be overstressed though, as official Arab communist parties continued to adhere, on the whole, to Moscow's position, and, compared to the non-communist Arab left, were theoretically rigid. Nevertheless, given their slavish behavior during the Stalinist era, the post-Stalin period represented a significant change. Theoretical dissension from the Soviet line among Arab communists was most evident with regard to two key issues. Examination of, first, the role of the Arab communist parties, and

second, the communists' relationship with Arab nationalism shows how, in the 1950s and 1960s, Arab communists' loss of Soviet support and increasing self-reliance forced them to formulate theoretical positions more in tune with Arab realities.

### **The role of a communist party**

As has already been noted, Soviet theoreticians in the post-Stalin era placed an increased emphasis on both united fronts and the progressive role of non-communist movements and governments, even to the extent of honoring some non-communist groups, such as the ASU in Egypt and the FLN in Algeria, with the title of "vanguard" parties. At the same time, Soviet foreign policy placed a decreasing value on the use of foreign communist parties and communist ideology, relying instead on inter-governmental links and realpolitik calculations. No longer could Arab communists count on automatic or extensive Soviet support. The USSR took little or no real action to protest anti-communist actions by friendly Arab regimes, and by its silence showed approval for the Egyptian Communist Party's dissolution in 1965.

All of this suggested a considerable threat to the Arab communist parties, and forced them to redefine their role within the Arab world, taking into account Arab conditions and local issues. Thus, in an address before an international seminar on national liberation sponsored by *World Marxist Review* in December, 1962, Aziz al-Hajj of the ICP expressed his concern that the role of the communists was diminishing:

There are, in my opinion . . . some wrong evaluations in the studies of some Marxists concerning the state of national democracy and the non-capitalist way of development. These could be summed up as an exaggeration of the progressive role of some national governments. There are views that some regimes led by progressive intellectuals can carry out general democratic transformations in the independent countries where capitalist relations exist but are not dominant, or where such relations have only recently become dominant and where, as a result, the national bourgeoisie is relatively weak. In my opinion, however, radical democratic reforms cannot be attained under the sole leadership of either the national bourgeoisie (even its left wing) or the progressive intellectuals from among the petty bourgeoisie. For these transformations to be realized, *the working class and its Marxist-Leninist party must play an active and influential role in the political development of the country.*<sup>48</sup>

In April, 1964, the communist parties of Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan issued a joint statement on Arab unity, upholding the aspirations of "the Arab peoples" and recommending the following:

- Taking into consideration the objective and local conditions of each Arab country.
- Recognizing democracy as the basic principle of representative government.
- Granting democratic freedoms to the masses.
- Adopting a national policy opposed to imperialism and supporting the Arab liberation movement.
- Realizing social progress.
- Guaranteeing the rights of national minorities that live within the Arab world.
- Strengthening ties of friendship with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries.
- Struggling for peace and peaceful co-existence.<sup>49</sup>

The cooperation of the Arab communists with Arab national forces remained restricted by the above limitations and was never free from some ambiguity. The challenge faced was admittedly complex, as what was at stake was not just the geopolitical configuration of the area, but also the potential shape and meaning for Arab socialism and communism as independent political movements in the region. The Arab communists were particularly interested in the preservation of their ideological and organizational separateness and independence. Although in April, 1965 the Egyptian Communist Party had officially dissolved itself as an “independent body,” and instructed its members to “submit – as individuals – their applications for membership in the [Nasserist] Arab Socialist Union,”<sup>50</sup> this example did not find much recognition among other communists in the region. Only the blindly pro-Moscow faction of the ICP contemplated such an option, though it was prevented by the majority of the party’s rank and file. Most of the Arab communists subscribed to Khalid Bakdash’s opinion, which, as already stated in 1958, was that: “We declared that we were for Arab unity but that we would never vote for anti-democratic principles, and would never agree to disband our party.”<sup>51</sup> Even in the heyday of the Arab communists’ and Arab nationalists’ common struggle and search for understanding, he did not change his view, emphasizing in 1965 that: “we do not consider it permissible to go so far as to deny the role of the communist parties and to call for their dissolution.”<sup>52</sup> Cooperation notwithstanding, the communists wanted to preserve their own identity and to be able to influence future events.

In the *Statement on the Situation in the Arab Countries* issued by the Arab communist parties at their May, 1967 joint conference, it was strongly emphasized that “communists have been and will remain an indispensable and effective force in the fight against imperialism . . . [and for] . . . the provision of the prerequisites of the transition to the socialist stage of development.”<sup>53</sup> Thus:

... every attempt to split the progressive forces, bring confusion into their ranks, and ignore or attack the Communist parties serves, as the sad experience of the past has shown, none but the interests of the imperialists and reactionaries, injuring the national liberation movement and progress, that is, the cause of the whole Arab people.<sup>54</sup>

By the 1970s, a balance had been struck between support for non-communist progressive movements and regimes, and continued communist activity as determined by (1) the important role of progressive parties in the Arab national liberation struggle, and (2) communist willingness to enter into united fronts with such groups in the struggle against imperialism. It was also stressed, however, that such cooperation would not come at the expense of communist autonomy. The “organizational, political, and ideological independence” of the Arab communist parties and their right to engage in political activity was always to be upheld.<sup>55</sup>

### **Arab nationalism**

A second issue that Arab communist parties were forced to address in the late 1950s and 1960s was that of Arab nationalism. The problems involved in this ideological arena had always been some of the most politically volatile and theoretically disputed in all communist and post-communist history. On the one hand, as will be discussed in Chapter 3, the communists have nearly always, at least in theory, supported the goals of national liberation of the colonized peoples as an integral part of the worldwide anti-imperialist struggle. On the other hand, their attitude toward the existing Third World national movements has often been marked by political vacillation, and even open hostility. More often than not, all national liberation movements, including the Arab one, have been seen as an expression of the interests of the upper classes of their respective societies, and relations with them have varied, depending on changing circumstances and political expediency. As already noted, in spite of many previous connections, during the latter part of Stalin’s rule, up to 1956, Arab communist parties maintained an essentially hostile attitude toward Arab nationalism, condemning it (in accordance with the Soviet theoretical line) as a bourgeois ideology. Instead of nationalism, Arab communists advocated proletarian internationalism – a doctrine which had little popular appeal in the Arab world and which, in Stalinist and occasionally post-Stalinist practice, meant the subordination of Arab communist movements to the CPSU. In a time when Arab feelings against outside interference in their affairs were high, this stance necessarily put the movement at a huge disadvantage. In spite of the deeply rooted and enduring Arab communist involvement in the national liberation movement(s) in the region, in the early phase of Arab communist parties’ history, the class struggle had still superseded in importance the struggle for the particular Arab national interests.

Some change came in 1956 when Soviet theorists began placing somewhat greater emphasis on anti-imperialist aspects of national liberation movements and when the Arab communists began paying lip-service to the ideals of Arab unity.<sup>56</sup> Such a change was, nevertheless, still rather limited, as Soviet analysts still classified nationalism as a bourgeois ideology (albeit one with some progressive features). Indeed, the Arab communists repeatedly opposed the formation of the UAR and pursued an anti-nationalist policy in Qasim's Iraq.

Nevertheless, it gradually became clear to many Arab communists that anti-nationalist parties had little future in the Arab world. As a result, divisions appeared within the ranks of most parties, as those cadres more amenable to Arab nationalism asserted their views and sought to alter party policy. Gradually, and often only after bitter infighting and the formation of a myriad of splinter groups, party after party began assuming a more nationalist stance. This occurred in the ICP after 1964, the LCP after 1968, and the CPSU after 1969. At their May, 1967 conference, the Arab communist parties called for unity, but it was the "unity of progressive forces in the Arab world against imperialism, rather than Arab unity per se."<sup>57</sup> At their 1968 joint conference, communists, although laudatory of the achievements of the Arab national liberation movement and the nationalist regimes, avoided any explicit endorsement of Arab nationalism and continued to emphasize "progressive" rather than "Arab" unity.<sup>58</sup> They attributed the 1967 defeat of the Arab countries by Israel to a variety of reasons: "progressive Arab countries" not only failed to coordinate economic and social changes with those political changes necessary for the realization of democracy, but also mistrusted, to their own detriment, the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. Also, "other Arab countries" were accused of "[conspiring] with American imperialism against the Arab cause."<sup>59</sup>

In a statement issued in November, 1973, the communist parties of Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon called the Sixth of October war a "just national liberation war," while stressing the importance of Soviet friendship for Arab solidarity and victory against American imperialism and Zionism.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, the communist parties' tasks were to include "intensifying the struggle against international imperialism . . . and against Zionism and its schemes against the Arab nationalist movement and the Palestinian resistance."<sup>61</sup> It should be noted that the communist parties' support of the "struggle for Arab unity on the basis of enmity towards imperialism, and on the basis of democracy and the interests of the masses,"<sup>62</sup> signified an acceptance of nationalism as a stage of development, not as a goal in and of itself.

By the time of their September, 1973 joint conference, all Arab communist parties had accepted the struggle for Arab unity, support for the Palestinian resistance movement, and other nationalist issues as major tasks to be addressed.<sup>63</sup> Such accommodation, and even acceptance of Arab nationalism, is also seen in the 1970 formation of al-Ansar (the

Companions) – a communist guerrilla organization within the framework of the Palestine Liberation Organization. It was also demonstrated by improved communist–Ba‘ath relations in Syria and Iraq, and in the ties forged between nationalists and communists in Lebanon after 1969.

The final crisis of eastern European and Soviet communism and the end of the Soviet Union removed many obstacles to a closer unity and cooperation of the Arab communists and progressive nationalists. In view of the failure of “internationalism, as it has been commonly understood for so many years,” and the growing conviction that “there is no longer any real authority behind any communist, revolutionary, workers’, or democratic party other than its people, its nation, and the groups that speak for their agendas and struggle,” the Arab communists had to reorganize themselves and face “a long series of practical and theoretical issues.”<sup>64</sup> Most of the parties decided to “devote attention to pan-Arabism, Arab unity, democracy within the party, and to bolstering new relations and alliances” including “a policy of greater openness toward the religious tendencies . . . [and toward] moderate Islamic parties that are also seeking change, and that see no objection in opening up to the other political parties.”<sup>65</sup>

Even the veteran hard-liner communist leader, Khalid Bakdash, now called for “the broadest Arab solidarity possible in the face of the Zionist and imperialist attempts and designs, and to work for expanding and strengthening democracy in every Arab country.”<sup>66</sup> However, in spite of the now enormous stress on unity and common struggle, together with all the Arab national and progressive forces, the Arab communists still reaffirmed their adherence to “the Marxist path and the path of dialectical materialism as a basic analytical tool” and to “the socialist option.”<sup>67</sup>

### **The partition of Palestine: the Arab communist response**

One can view the Palestinian issue as a microcosm, not only of those problems facing the region but also of the dilemmas facing Arab communists: perspectives of internationalism versus nationalism, social transformation versus national liberation, a regional overview versus an individual-country approach, loyalty to internationally upheld theory versus regional or creative ethos, and the natures of Zionism and imperialism and their relation to Arab history. Indeed, the Palestinian issue exemplifies the fundamental challenges of meshing the tenets of communism with Arab traditions, customs, economic and social conditions, religion, and political reality.

Until November, 1947, when the Partition Plan was adopted, the Arab communist movement had a relatively unified position on the Palestine issue. There was an outright rejection of Zionism, and an equally strong negation of the very principle of partition. Furthermore, three steps toward a solution were identified and proposed: (1) the cessation of immigration

into the region, (2) abolition of the mandate, and (3) the establishment of a democratic state in Palestine. In late October, 1947, a communiqué was issued as a result of the meeting of the Syrian and Lebanese communist parties, reiterating the movement's stance on the Palestine issue:

[The British – and lately American – imperialists] worked diligently to make the Palestine question one of a racial conflict between Arabs and Jews. In this they have been assisted by the Zionist leadership, in order to feed animosity and tension between Arabs and Jews, halting any possibility of agreement or rapprochement. The solution for the Palestine issue requires evacuation [of the mandate forces], independence, the abolishment of the mandate, and the complete rejection of the Partition Plan. [The Syrian Communist Party and the Lebanese Communist Party] believe that it is possible for Arabs and Jews to live in Palestine in a democratic, united, independent state.<sup>68</sup>

Soviet support of the November, 1947 Partition Plan not only pulled the figurative rug out from under the Arab communists, but also reinforced their isolation in the Arab world and essentially forced them into the role of apologist for their prime support, the Soviet Union.

Disarray among Arab communists continued until approximately 1955, after which they attempted to adjust to the new Soviet line of advancing the causes of what they perceived as progressive Arab states. Although the Arab communist parties (Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan), in a 1964 joint statement, upheld the aspirations of the Arab peoples towards unity, and called for the adoption of a national policy that was opposed to imperialism and supported the Arab liberation movement, they did not mention the Palestinian issue.<sup>69</sup> In April, 1966, however, their joint statement, published at a time when the Palestinian issue was virtually ignored by the Soviet bloc countries and unmentioned in Soviet media, hailed the establishment of the PLO as “an important achievement for the Palestine Arab people.” The statement also called for “working for the restitution of [their] usurped rights,” and the transformation of the PLO “into a democratic organization, relying increasingly on the masses of the Palestine Arab people, with all their patriotic, progressive and democratic forces.”<sup>70</sup>

Yet it wasn't until after 1967 that Arab communists, to varying degrees, began a serious process of self-criticism regarding the Palestine issue. Communists in countries such as Sudan and Morocco completely rejected their previous policies, while other groups attempted to admit to a “past mistake.” This led to rifts among the communists in countries such as Iraq, Syria, and Jordan. In their first reactions to the outcomes of the 1967 war, probably under the impact of official Soviet policy, the Arab communist parties had shown a marked cautiousness toward the nascent Palestinian resistance movement. In July, 1968, their conference supported Security

Council Resolution 242 of November, 1967: "for arriving at a peaceful solution in the area," and opposed the attacks carried out by commando (fedayeen) groups inside Israel and the occupied territories as an "adventure which frustrates efforts for a peaceful solution and increases tension in the area."<sup>71</sup>

However, during the next two years, this position of condemnation of armed resistance as adventurist was subjected to a deep transformation. In September, 1970, in the face of the Jordanian government's attempt to destroy the Palestinian movement, the Lebanese, Syrian, and Jordanian communist parties, in a telegram to the Palestinian leadership, expressed their support for "our joint battle and with all our means and with arms."<sup>72</sup> Toward the middle of January, 1971, the three parties, joined now by the ICP, emphatically stated that:

The communists consider the cause of the Palestinian Arab people to be their own cause too, as much as it is the cause of all progressive patriots in the Arab countries in their struggle to solve this problem side by side with the Palestinian people, supported in that by the forces of freedom and socialism in the world.<sup>73</sup>

They identified Israel as an "expansionist threat in the area and in the world."<sup>74</sup>

Despite these words of support, none of the parties would call for an end to the existence of the state of Israel. In accordance with the Soviet line, their avowed goal was only "an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories" and "condemnation of its criminal aggression."<sup>75</sup> However, the April, 1975 statement also stressed the Palestinian people's "right to return to their homeland, their right to self-determination on their own land, and their right to establish their own national state."<sup>76</sup> The same stand was repeated by the communists, in even stronger terms, in April, 1978, when they called for "ensuring full political, material and military support for the Palestinian revolution, on the basis of attaining the freedom of political choice which reflects the independent nationalist identity of the Palestinian Arab people."<sup>77</sup>

The Arab communist parties' support for the Palestinian struggle became, from then on, a constant and pronounced feature of all their common declarations and policies. In February, 1985 they condemned and categorically rejected the Amman agreement between King Hussein and Yasser Arafat.<sup>78</sup> In accordance with the Palestinian opposition, they considered it to run "counter to the resolutions of previous sessions of the National Council of Palestine . . . and the decisions of the Fez summit meeting" and to infringe on the "Palestinian people's right to create their own independent national state."<sup>79</sup> In November, 1985, the Arab communists' and workers' parties called on "all patriotic forces in the Arab countries, and all the mass organizations cherishing people's dignity and their legitimate rights, urging them to voice their solidarity with the Palestinians struggle in the Occupied Territories."<sup>80</sup> One of their last joint statements, before the final crisis of



the international communist movement on December 15, 1987, welcomed the outbreak of the Palestinian intifada, perceiving it as a “qualitatively new stage” in the Palestinian struggle.<sup>81</sup>

### **Arab communist parties in the 1980s**

During the 1980s, communist adaptation to local circumstances did much to enhance their viability and chances of survival in the Arab world, especially since they could not count on Soviet support to insulate them from the realities of regional developments. Nevertheless, communist parties in the Arab world remained small. Haunted by a legacy of Stalin-inspired political blunders, and vigorously suppressed by some governments, large popular support has to this day escaped them.

In Syria, the communist party has been semi-legal since 1972, though its role is limited by its membership in the National Progressive Front and its activities are tightly controlled by the regime. The result is that the party has become fragmented and, by December, 1973, there were two communist parties. In Lebanon, the LCP has suffered from the sectarianism of the political system, as well as from the chaos following the 1976 civil war and the 1982 Israeli invasion. Similarly, al-Ansar has faded away, and the Palestinian Communist Party, which separated itself from the Jordanian Communist Party in 1982, has continued to be overshadowed among the worldwide Palestinian community, by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and some other left-wing Palestinian organizations. In the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, however, the communists have been able to develop a solid though limited social and organizational infrastructure and an autonomous leadership, which, for many years, made them a key underground opposition force against the occupation.<sup>82</sup> In 1987, the relative strength and political importance of the Palestinian Communist Party was demonstrated by its admission to the PLO Executive Committee at the Eighteenth Palestine National Council (PNC) meeting.<sup>83</sup>

Also, in Israel, and to a certain extent in the Sudan, local communist parties enjoy some popular support. In Israel, this is because the “Arab” communist splinter party, Rakah, has become one of the few legal avenues of protest open to Palestinians. In the case of Sudan, the Sudanese Communist Party has retained its organization and support despite years of suppression and continues to be a significant political force.

Arab communist party policy in the 1980s represented, in essence, the continued application of doctrines developed in the 1950s and 1960s. A typical example of this policy can be found in the statement issued at a meeting of the communist and workers’ parties of the Persian Gulf and Arabian Peninsula in December, 1980.<sup>84</sup> In this document, the Arab communist parties defined their “general national-democratic tasks” in the following terms:

- Achievement and strengthening of national independence in the countries of the region.
- Democratic freedoms for the peoples of the region.
- A policy of developing the national economy without its subordination to the world imperialist market, the creation of industry in the countries of the region, complex development of their economy, elimination of multinational imperialist monopolies, the use of the natural resources of the region . . . for the benefit of its peoples, a national oil policy meeting the requirements of national economic development, and resolute economic measures . . . against the United States, arch-enemy of our people.
- Pursuit by the countries of the Persian Gulf and Arabian Peninsula area of an independent peaceful foreign policy . . . non-participation in the schemes of imperialism . . . and extension of spheres of cooperation with socialist countries.
- Deepening of ties with national-liberation movements in the countries of the region, and cohesion with the revolutionary forces in the world, especially the socialist community headed by the USSR.
- Struggle against all conceptions and ideas imposed by imperialism and reaction, against “right” and “left” opportunism, national chauvinism, anti-communism and anti-Sovietism, Trotskyism and Maoism.<sup>85</sup>

According to the Arab communists, a primary method for achieving such goals and advancing the Arab national liberation movement was to be found in the formation of united fronts:

The advance of the national liberation struggle in the region calls for the unification of the social anti-imperialist, anti-reactionary forces in each individual country. [The purpose of this is] the fulfillment of the basic national-democratic tasks, and also the cohesion of the ranks of the democratic parties, organizations and forces in these countries, within the framework of a national alliance. Each of the participants should remain ideologically and organizationally independent, as the basic condition for its success.<sup>86</sup>

The statement’s emphasis on communist autonomy within the framework of a “national alliance” should be noted.<sup>87</sup>

Somewhat less attention to Arab nationalist themes can be detected in the statements of the Arab communist parties in the 1980s. This, however, should not be construed as a return to an anti-nationalist position, but rather as the result of three developments: the decline of Arab nationalism, the decline of its concomitant support for the Palestinian cause, and, finally, the decline of Soviet influence over the Arab communist movement.

First, the declining power of Arab nationalism as a political force has manifested itself in the political fragmentation of the Arab world, and in

the partial replacement of radical Arab nationalism by Islamic fundamentalism as the major challenge to imperialism and the social status quo in the Arab world. Second, the prominence of Arab nationalism within Arab communist statements has declined with the rise of Israeli–Palestinian tensions, and the concomitant tendency of Arab communists to support Palestinian rights in lieu of theoretical and philosophical discussion of Arab nationalism. These two developments have led to a new focus on the part of Arab communists, that of popular democracy as a weapon against what they considered to be reactionary and imperialist forces, instead of advocating a traditional vanguard role for the parties themselves to lead the revolution.

The third factor leading to a reduced attention to Marxist themes was the decrease in Soviet control over the Arab communist movement. Until the demise of the Soviet Union, although laudatory references to the USSR called for closer Arab–Soviet relations, and condemnation of the Soviet Union’s political and ideological opponents continued to be the routine features of Arab communist parties’ statements, their relative scope and importance markedly diminished. All in all, in the 1980s, Soviet influence remained significant, but Soviet control over the Arab communist movement was increasingly challenged.

### **3 The Soviet Union and Arab issues: 1919–1967**

Soviet policies and political predispositions had a very significant impact on the Arab communist movement. This impact resulted from two inter-related factors, beginning with the special role of the Soviet Communist Party in the Soviet state. This allowed for the hegemonic role of the Soviet party to manifest itself within the international communist movement. As clandestine parties outlawed by Arab governments, Arab communist parties were politically and financially dependent on the Soviet Communist Party. It provided the material, financial, and moral support needed by the parties to maintain activities and groups of activists in the face of political suppression and imprisonment. However, as it grew from an independent body to subsume the Soviet state, the Soviet Communist Party came to represent national rather than international interests. Its policies and predispositions were oriented toward the interests of the Soviet state. In other words, the Soviet party's position on Arab issues was determined by the interests of the Soviet state, and was not guided solely by ideological principles. Thus, one of the most important variables in the development of Arab communist parties was the degree to which they accepted Soviet policies on basic Arab issues.

The operational link between local parties and the international communist movement was maintained through the Comintern (to 1943, and the Cominform from 1947 to 1956). After 1956, a special department of the CPSU continued to control communist parties outside the Soviet Union. Organized under the protection, and with the support of the Central Committee of the CPSU, the Comintern provided organizational legitimacy, ideological leadership, and political support for local communist parties. While in theory it provided the mechanism for establishing ideological interconnections between local and international parties, in practice, as super-power competition internationalized a number of issues, local issues as well as issues particular to industrial society were dictated by the CPSU. Thus, the agenda for the international communist movement was set, more in terms of an international arena dominated by industrial powers, than in terms of an international movement with a membership operating in contexts defined by local and regional circumstances.

Two different, though largely interwoven, ideological trends influenced the policies and programs of the Arab communist parties. First, the changing needs and requirements of Soviet state interests would often be paramount. Second, the situation within the international communist movement itself would affect Arab communists through the changing international response to Soviet machinations. As a result, alternatives to Soviet primacy were made possible. The early strident appeals of the October revolution for unity of the common struggle against Western imperialism reiterated forcefully at both the second international congress in July, 1920, and at the Baku Congress of the Peoples of the East in September, 1920 – after the debacle in China – and again at the Sixth International Congress in 1928, were replaced by class conflict tactics, and a consequent repudiation of any links with the bourgeois nationalist movements.

Nevertheless, in 1935, the Seventh Comintern Congress appealed for the creation of anti-fascist national fronts. These fronts were perceived by the Soviet Union to be tools in its struggle against the German and Japanese threats in Europe and the Far East. Popular Front tactics were temporarily brushed aside again in 1939 after the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, but regained their political usefulness and ideological acceptance when, on June 22, 1941, Hitler attacked the Soviet Union. During the war, and even shortly after, the Arab communists cooperated both with the local national bourgeois political forces and the mandatory powers in their anti-Nazi efforts.

In the post-war period of the Cold War, correspondingly hostile relations developed with all bourgeois forces, inside and outside Arab countries. However, in February, 1956, the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU enabled the Arab communist parties to commence a completely new era in their involvement in the national liberation struggle. The Syrian communist leader, Khalid Bakdash, then went as far as to conceive of a “national unity between all sections of the people, regardless of class or party affiliation, on the basis of a common program of moderate reforms.”<sup>1</sup> The programs of the communist parties of Syria and Lebanon, which were adopted in 1944, did not even mention the name of socialism. However, after the victory over the Axis, and with the advent of the Cold War, the national bourgeoisie once more became the chief villain, and the communist parties of the Arab East subscribed blindly to the anti-Western Soviet foreign policies, going as far as to endorse the UN Resolution on the Partition of Palestine in 1947 against the wishes of the majority of their members.

The Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in February, 1956 initiated a new stage in the Arab communist parties’ relationship with Arab nationalist forces, in which the Arab communists accepted the new Soviet ideological premises regarding the progressive role of the national bourgeoisie in the global struggle against imperialism. In this, they were willing to restrict themselves to the role of junior partners in a “strong, broad and solid national front with a common patriotic program acceptable to it.”<sup>2</sup> They were also willing to accept the then fashionable Soviet thesis on the

possibility of the “non-capitalist path of development,” without the necessity for communist leadership, and to submit themselves to the ideological and political structures of the ruling “progressive” regimes which were allied with the Soviet Union. Until the late 1960s or even the early 1970s, Arab communist parties still paid some, but only secondary, attention to regional issues and the situation of the Arab people. The main focus of their attention and loyalty was to the international communist movement and its Soviet center. With perhaps the exception of the Sudanese Communist Party (as discussed in Chapter 6), Arab issues were consequently subordinated to the broader considerations, and approached according to Moscow’s latest decisions. Even in the late 1980s, although Gorbachev’s policies were already causing many doubts among Third World leaders, Arab communists in general did not want to criticize the Soviet Union and, in spite of relatively greater autonomy, supported the declining Soviet leadership up until the very end.

### **The Arab National Liberation Movement**

Soon after the 1917 October revolution, the Soviet leaders encouraged Arab and other Asian and Middle Eastern anti-colonial activists to join the popular struggle for national liberation.<sup>3</sup> Reasoning that the achievement of national liberation was possible only with united effort within the country, the Soviets even contemplated utilizing Islam as a “cultural movement,” and “the only factor of unity among the Muslims,” for that purpose.<sup>4</sup>

At that time, they also considered the prospects for extending the struggle for political independence by tying it to the battle for social justice and ultimately the implementation of socialist ideas. Consequently, Arab communists had strong ideological interests and practical involvement in the Arab national liberation movement. As such then, they had an impact on the ideological and organizational shape of Arab politics in the twentieth century that was, on the whole, quite disproportional to their direct political role and real strength in the area.

From the very beginning, the Iraqi communists in particular were strongly orientated toward a pan-Arab course. The Jam‘iyat al-Ahrar (Association of Liberals) published in its 1929 program a call urging that people regard “all Arab countries as one country.”<sup>5</sup> Further, its members were bound to pledge their loyalty, making an oath upon “the honor of Arabism.”<sup>6</sup> At that time, the communists’ pan-Arab political orientation was, at least partly, inspired by Soviet interests in an alliance with the broad popular Arab movement in a common struggle against the Western powers. As the Soviet security official, George Agabekov of the Eastern department of the Combined State Political Directorate (Ob’edinennoe Gosudarstvennoe Politicheskoe Upravlenie, or OGPU) then noted, the Soviet government dreamt “of a united and independent Arab state that could be pitted against England and France in the east.”<sup>7</sup>

Other Arab communist parties were soon to follow the Iraqis in their support of Arab unity. As early as 1931, the resolution adopted at the conference of the communist parties of Palestine and Syria condemned the division of the Arab world imposed by the imperialist powers after World War I, stating that, “These boundaries artificially weaken the masses of the Arab peoples in their struggle against the foreign yoke for their political independence and national unification in accordance with the free decision of the masses of the people.”<sup>8</sup> Both of these parties had a strong Comintern connection and therefore closely followed the official Soviet line.

According to the resolution, in spite of the fact that the “various areas of the Arab countries are at different stages of economic development and class struggle,”<sup>9</sup> the Arab masses felt that “in order to cast off the yoke of imperialism they must unite their forces, relying on a common language, historical conditions, and a common enemy.”<sup>10</sup> The Palestinian and Syrian communists were also quite confident that:

the Arab peoples have all the prerequisites to cast off the imperialist yoke, to achieve national political independence, and create a number of Arab states, which thereafter, of their own free will, would unite on the basis of federal principles.<sup>11</sup>

This may explain the parties’ hesitant attitude toward becoming involved with the *petit bourgeoisie* and other national revolutionary groups of the period. Typically, for all future communist documents on the issue of Arab unity, the statement anticipated its gradual and free voluntary implementation, and assumed both the complete national state independence of the Arab countries involved, and that a federal political structure would be established. The formulas then adopted were upheld at the conference of the Arab communist parties in the autumn of 1935, but according to the Secretary General of the Iraqi Communist Party, who participated in its proceedings:

the delegates having studied the [Arab] question from every side, came to the conclusion that the slogan of “Arab unity” (*al-Wahdah al-‘Arabiyyah*) was unworkable owing to the uneven development of the Arab countries . . . and the unwillingness of the kings and emirs to abandon their thrones. The delegates resolved, therefore . . . to hold up a realizable watchword . . . and settled on “Arab Federation” (*al-Ittihad al-Arabi*), that is, on advocating a voluntary federal union embracing the independent Arab countries.<sup>12</sup>

Probably, both because of the impact of Marxist-Leninist theory and the strong non-Arab ethnic minorities represented in their rank and file, the Arab communists soon showed some doubt and cautiousness toward the grandiose appeals of Arab nationalism. In 1939, Khalid Bakdash noted:

Most of our politicians and writers have scarcely discussed our national problems scientifically. They believe that by ignoring the factor of geography they, in fact, eliminate its effect on the rise and development of nations. They do not realize that in doing so they behave like an ostrich which buries its head until it ceases to see the enemy. It then thinks that the enemy is not seeing it, whereas it is the ostrich which is not seeing the enemy. It is geography that separates Syria from Algeria and Iraq from Egypt. It has shaped and continues to shape the culture, economic and intellectual life and psychological fabric of each country.<sup>13</sup>

However, a more cautious, and even somewhat skeptical, attitude did not mean the repudiation of the goal of Arab unity that the Arab communists conceived of as an essential tool for strengthening the national liberation struggle against Western imperialism. Their proposed rule was to “proceed separately but to strike together.”<sup>14</sup> Occasional temporary agreements with the Arab nationalist groups for common action were considered permissible “provided their vacillation and inconsistency are criticized, thereby preserving the complete ideological and organizational independence of the communist movement.”<sup>15</sup> The communists’ participation in the national liberation of the Arab countries was considered by them as a way to achieve a position of leadership of the peasant masses, the poor in the city, and the masses of the *petit bourgeoisie*. As the resolution stated:

Hegemony over the working class cannot be realized without a persistent proletarian struggle for Arab national independence and freedom . . . [just as] there can be no lasting victory for national and political independence without an agrarian peasant revolution, and the establishment of a workers’ and peasants’ government, at least in the more developed Arab countries (Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and Algeria).<sup>16</sup>

But, according to Walter Z. Laqueur, until the Soviet Union as a state became actively involved in Middle Eastern affairs “Communism, more often than not (like 19th century liberalism in Europe), had grown up together with nationalism, and for many years, a conflict between the two was not even considered possible.”<sup>17</sup> Their mutual relations were nevertheless later subjected to numerous tensions and much hostility, the causes of which included not only the Palestinian question, which will be discussed separately later, but also Soviet enmity toward the creation in 1945 of the Arab League, which they considered to be a tool of British imperialism. All-in-all, especially in light of the fact that Stalin, during the latter part of his rule, considered the Arab communist parties to be primarily an appendage of Soviet foreign policy, and only incidentally, as indigenous revolutionary movements, Soviet-Arab and Soviet-Muslim relations had entered a time of relative lull and inaction. Indeed, fresh initiatives were



not taken until Khrushchev's time – especially after the breakthrough of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in 1956.

The new Soviet view on Arab nationalism and Arab unity was clearly articulated in 1958, in an article in the first issue of *World Marxist Review*, the official organ of the international communist movement. The article, by L. Tismaneanu, discussed Arab unity in the context of national liberation movements:

It is typical of the national liberation movement in the Arab East that the developing anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution has been combined with the movement for the solidarity of the peoples. This is a distinctive form of the Arab people's national liberation struggle at the present stage. The growing solidarity of the Arab countries is an objective process governed by the objective laws of history.<sup>18</sup>

He went on to say that:

The establishment of a capacious internal market is the objective economic content of Arab unification. The movement for Arab unity today is led by the Arab national bourgeoisie for the establishment of a common Arab market, [and] is necessitated, above all, by its class interests.<sup>19</sup>

In spite of the class nature of Arab unity, the Syrian–Egyptian union and the resulting establishment of the United Arab Republic in 1958 were presented in this article as progressive, by virtue of their anti-imperialist and anti-feudal trend. “Both the working class and the peasantry of the Arab countries,” Tismaneanu pointed out, “stand to benefit from its successful development . . . the working class sees its objective in contributing as much as it can to the progressive, democratic tendency of the movement.”

Not all means to Arab unity, however, were considered progressive:

Some warring feudal and monarchic groups likewise advocate unity of the Arab world for tactical consideration. The federation of Iraq and Jordan, . . . was intended to prevent consolidation of the Arab lands, disrupt Arab unity in the interest of imperialism, and protect the class privileges of the feudal and monarchic groups.<sup>20</sup>

However, the Soviet assessment of the Syrian–Egyptian union fluctuated. In 1961, Soviet comments on the union changed from a completely positive tone to a critical tone. According to Plyshevskiy, “The African peoples reaching out toward unity . . . have before them the deplorable example of Egypt and Syria. As is generally known, union in this case amounted to the subordination of Syria to Egypt.”<sup>21</sup> This comment seems to be a

supportive response to an early criticism by Bakdash on the union. Bakdash had complained: "The experience of the nearly three years that have passed since the formation of the UAR has taught the peasants, and all Syrians that the union imposed on them has no sound basis." He called for a liberation of Syria from Egyptian colonialism.<sup>22</sup>

After the break-up of the Syrian–Egyptian union in 1961, Soviet commentary attributed the failure to the "dictatorial concept of unity fostered by Nasser and the expansionist bourgeoisie of Egypt." The Soviet article also emphasized the interests of the working masses, democratic principles and respect for the features and interests of each Arab nation.<sup>23</sup> It seems that the Soviets were now taking a more sophisticated approach toward Arab unity than they had in 1958. The unity led by the bourgeoisie was not necessarily progressive, as was suggested in 1958. Apart from establishing a unified market for Arab nations and fighting against imperialism, Arab unity should also address the interests of the working class and work toward the goal of political freedom. The regional communists' attitudes and interests were here strictly interwoven with the Soviet party and state policy, which, in addition to having ideological goals, also sought for concrete achievements and underwent frequent adjustments and reformulations. Although both Nasser and the Soviet leadership tried to preserve friendly appearances, the latent tension was nevertheless often open, causing multifarious domestic and international problems and difficulties. In an article published on January 29, 1959, *Al-Ahram*'s editor-in-chief and confidante of President Nasser, Mohamed Heikal, rejected Khrushchev's statement that the Soviet Union could not be indifferent to the anti-communist campaign in the Arab states.<sup>24</sup> Instead, he upheld the Bandung principles of respect for national sovereignty, non-interference in the affairs of others, and the right of nations to choose freely their own political and social system, and suggested that the people of the UAR admired the Soviet Union because of its positive policies toward the Arab world, and not out of consideration for local communists.<sup>25</sup> In his reply, the Soviet leader expressed disappointment that no more attention was being paid to the democratic demands of the people. "On the contrary, measures are being taken to suppress freedom-loving efforts, not only in the UAR, but also in other countries."<sup>26</sup> He also attacked the notion of Arab nationalism being above the interests of separate Arab governments and states, and of the diverse social strata of these states. Although most Arabs are united against imperialism, when that fight is won, "one cannot ignore the interests of the people. For the interests of all Arabs cannot coincide."<sup>27</sup> The Arab nationalists' point of view was stressed again by the well-known Lebanese Arab nationalist (Nasserist), Clovis Maqsud, who observed that:

although Soviet communism represents one of the models of social and economic development for the developing countries, and as such, is a

very important factor in international relations, it must also realize that Arab non-Marxist socialism is just as valid a model.<sup>28</sup>

The different attitudes and contrasting positions which are thus outlined were, in fact, never resolved, even though, depending on the political circumstances, they were often more or less pronounced and articulated. Even the much celebrated visit by Khrushchev to Egypt in May 1964 did not pass without incident. The contentious issue of Arab nationalism and Arab unity had been taken over by Khrushchev, especially in his speech at Aswan on May 16, 1964. Reacting to Iraqi President 'Arif's (1921–1966) description of the meeting as an "expression of Arab unity,"<sup>29</sup> Khrushchev praised the unity on a class basis and stated that "The Soviet Union has not come to the assistance of the Arabs in general but to the assistance of the Arab people who have embarked on the struggle against colonialism and the system of colonies."<sup>30</sup> He also asked the question: "Are there not Arab capitalists and feudalists . . . [who] are the brethren of the Arab workers?"<sup>31</sup>

Although President Nasser did not completely agree with his guest, insisting that Arab unity was not a "racist slogan" but a reflection of "deep historical reality" based on a "unity of material existence, a single conscience, and a single world view,"<sup>32</sup> he also added that: "the national society which the Arab masses have built will have no room for the oppressive fief or capital."<sup>33</sup> This and similar declarations stressing the egalitarian and essentially socialist character of the UAR social reconstruction apparently pleased the Soviet leader, who considered them to represent a "big step forward."<sup>34</sup> Being persuaded about the friendly attitude of the non-communist, nationalist Arab leaders toward the Soviet Union, and the willingness, of at least some of them, to enter the path of socialist construction, the Soviets now decided to support the Arab national liberation movement without further hesitation, and to recognize, at least up to a certain point, the Arab socialist experiments as being legitimate and progressive.

Khrushchev's aforementioned visit to Egypt on May 9–25, 1964 marked a definite, even though temporary breakthrough in Soviet policy, not only toward the UAR and the Arab peoples, but, although in a more indirect way, toward the Third World as a whole. The importance of the visit, and the crucial character of the shift which it made apparent, were especially demonstrated by the new and more expanded Soviet support of the semi-socialist progressive nationalist regimes in the Arab and other Third World countries, and the recognition of the social transformations they had imposed, as the non-capitalist path of development which might at least provide prospects for the establishment of a truly socialist society. At the same time, the Soviet leaders often left the local communist parties largely to their own fate, turning a blind eye to their frequent persecutions, and even forcing them to submit to, and cooperate actively with, the friendly "progressive" regimes. The "non-party orientation"<sup>35</sup> of the new Soviet

Middle Eastern policy, and their apparent neglect of the vital interests of the local communist parties, were nevertheless bound to cause a negative reaction from the Arab communists, many of whom started to rebel against Soviet hegemony and look for a new, more independent, and nationally orientated political direction.

The change in Soviet policy was preceded by a relatively long period of hesitation and internal discussions, which started soon after the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in February, 1956. Some Soviet ideologists and politicians then rediscovered and adapted to the new, and what was apparently at that time a very promising, circumstance – the Leninist thesis that “with the help of the proletariat of the advanced countries, the backward countries can switch to the Soviet system and – following certain steps of development – to communism, without having to pass through the capitalist stage.”<sup>36</sup> The theoretical developments, which took the form of the concept of “national democracy,” based on a broad national front and a national democratic state, received political approval from the 1960 Conference of Communist and Workers’ Parties in Moscow.

The petit-bourgeois strata, which once played the role of a temporary, tactical ally of the working class and the progressive forces, now began to be considered by Marxists as the vehicle of transition to socialism. As one Soviet scholar characterized them:

The national democrats are a revolutionary force which is aware that, in our time, progress is impossible without definite steps toward socialism. It boldly takes these steps, is capable of resolute actions, not only anti-imperialist, but also anti-capitalist, combats bourgeois conciliatory trends, and comes close to the position of scientific socialism on a number of fundamental issues.<sup>37</sup>

The state dominated by them was considered to be an instrument of social transformations, “creating the conditions for a step-by-step transition to a society in which socialist production relations will predominate.”<sup>38</sup> Markedly differing from the previous Marxist theories, Soviet scholars now argued that “under the influence of the theory and practice of world socialism, many petit bourgeois theories and policies in developing countries are undergoing significant changes. As a consequence, revolutionary democracy has emerged.”<sup>39</sup> Since its very beginning, in the eyes of the Soviet leaders, these new theories seemed particularly applicable to the Arab world and the Middle East. In addition to the strategic and realpolitik considerations, Soviet politicians then held that, as Primakov wrote in 1965, “the process in the evolution of the anti-imperialist struggle into that of a non-capitalist path of development, has gone further in the Arab World than in many other regions of the ‘Third World’.”<sup>40</sup> In addition, the majority of the developing countries that wanted to follow a socio-economic development were to be found in the Middle East.<sup>41</sup>

The importance and possible implications of the UAR's 1961 decrees, which introduced large-scale nationalization of the economy, and a radical social reforms program, could not have passed unnoticed by Soviet observers. However, the initial Soviet reaction to them was cautious and rather skeptical. *Pravda's* Cairo correspondent, V. Mayevskiy, describing the discussions which were then fashionable in Cairo about the differences between "Arab national cooperative socialism" and communism, concluded:

We can indeed confirm that this is far removed from communism. But it is also far from building socialism. In speaking of this we are not intending to lessen the importance of the President's decrees in the UAR. The people place great hopes in them. Will these hopes be realized? The realization of these decrees depends on whether their fulfillment will be impeded by the reactionary forces which doubtless will attempt to put a spoke in the wheel.<sup>42</sup>

He also questioned the legitimacy of the Arab or any other Third World non-Marxist-Leninist socialism, asking ironically:

What a lot of kinds of socialism there are now! In one of the young African countries they even proclaim "lyrical socialism." The fact is, however, that there are no different types of socialism. There exists only one real socialism, based on Marxist-Leninist teaching and proved by the great experience of the Soviet land and other socialist countries.<sup>43</sup>

Academic Boris Ponomarev, while recommending "non-capitalist development" under the state of "national democracy" as the best way to "abolish age-long backwardness and improve living standards," nevertheless argued that "the 'decisive moment' in the national democratic revolution occurs when the people are granted full political rights and liberties." He consequently condemned "despotic regimes" such as the UAR and Iraq, and asserted that the "Communists . . . work for a genuine democratization of social life and rally all the progressive forces to combat despotic regimes and curb tendencies towards setting up such regimes."<sup>44</sup>

Another Soviet expert, V. Tyagunenko, after a thorough and generally sympathetic analysis of reform measures introduced by the UAR government in 1961, concluded, however, that, taken as a whole, they do not go beyond "state capitalist measures."<sup>45</sup> One of his colleagues even argued that:

The establishment of a state sector does not affect the interests of private capitalist enterprise. Indeed, statesmen and politicians of bourgeois countries of Asia and Africa have frequently affirmed this . . .

this is how President Nasser has defined the economic policy of his government, “It is necessary that the state should be in charge of economy. When we intervene, this does not mean that we want to destroy or weaken capitalism, it only means that we consider it our duty to watch it.”<sup>46</sup>

However, these and other similar opinions would soon be submitted to revisions and transformations. The 1961 UAR National Charter that established the Arab Socialist Union as a “socialist vanguard which leads the masses,” was characterized by the leading Soviet expert, G. Mirsky, as a document “in which the influence of socialist ideology is being felt.”<sup>47</sup> As early as July, 1962, Mirsky denied that the leadership of the UAR, and some other African countries, should be considered representative of the bourgeoisie. He understood them instead as revolutionary democrats who appreciated the necessity of transforming the anti-colonial revolution into an anti-capitalist one.<sup>48</sup>

He further clarified his ideas, and expanded them in more detail, in his article, “The Proletariat and National Liberation,” published in the *New Times* in May, 1964, on the eve of Khrushchev’s visit to Egypt. In essence, his argument transformed the domestic concept of the worker–peasant alliance into the international concept of the alliance between socialist states and the national liberation movements of the Third World peoples. According to him:

Just as the proletariat must form a strong alliance with the peasantry for victory over the bourgeoisie, the revolutionary proletariat must form a strong alliance with the national liberation movements for victory over international imperialism. . . . But the progress of that struggle, its success and future, depends primarily on strengthening the forces of world socialism, which play the leading, vanguard role in the single stream of revolutionary anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist movement.<sup>49</sup>

Although he rejected the revisionist opinion of those who argued that “the chief contradiction of our era is between oppressed nations and imperialism,”<sup>50</sup> he, nevertheless, admitted that, “in our day, with the socialist world system so decisively influencing the course of world events, . . . the national liberation revolution can immediately break out of the framework of bourgeois-democratic revolution and begin the transition to socialist revolution.”<sup>51</sup>

Probably the most interesting and innovative part of his argument was the thesis that, if in some of the Third World countries, “the conditions for proletarian leadership have not yet matured, the historic mission of breaking with capitalism can be carried out by elements close to the working class” – the revolutionary-democratic leaders of mainly petit bourgeois class origins.<sup>52</sup> According to him, “one example – but by no means

the only one – of such an evolution is Algeria. Led by Ben-Bella, the revolutionary-democrats are guiding the country towards a non-capitalist path of development.”<sup>53</sup>

In the same issue of the *New Times*, another Soviet commentator, I. Belyaev, exonerated the UAR from the Ponomarev accusation. He wrote:

If the UAR had from the first day of the revolution “classical democracy”, so called, it is the big bourgeoisie that would have profited. They not only had the money needed to finance political activity; bourgeois democracy in the UAR would have eminently suited the West. Through old established ties with the Egyptian landlords and capitalists, the imperialists could have influenced the course of the revolution, directing it into the channels they wanted.<sup>54</sup>

Belyaev and other Soviet observers also expressed their satisfaction at the political relaxation of the country where, following promulgation of the Provisional Constitution, martial law was lifted, and emergency law repealed. As a result, most of the communists had been released from prison and the chance arose to “unite all genuine patriots in the name of building a truly new society in which exploitation will be unknown.”<sup>55</sup>

Although their sanguine expectations were not always in accordance with other more cautious Soviet opinions, Khrushchev’s forthcoming visit to Egypt was undoubtedly a great success for the Arabs. In the “Joint Statement on Conversations Between Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers N.S. Khrushchev and UAR President Gamel Abdel Nasser,” Khrushchev expressed the regard of the Soviet government and people for the role the UAR and President Nasser played in the “struggle against colonialism in all its forms, and against foreign domination, which presents a major danger to the freedom of newly-independent countries.”<sup>56</sup>

For the first time in its history, the Soviet Union also expressed its

full support for the struggle of the Arab states against the aggressive machinations of the imperialist forces which seek to use the Palestine problem to increase tension in the Middle East and are obstructing the settlement of that problem in compliance with the UN resolutions and with due regard for the lawful and inalienable rights of the Palestine Arabs.<sup>57</sup>

Both sides stressed that “to promote the success of the national liberation struggle, joint action by the peoples fighting against imperialism and foreign domination must be increased.”<sup>58</sup> Both also “reaffirmed that peoples fighting for their lawful rights in the cause of liberation and independence, are not alone today in their heroic struggle against the forces of imperialism.”<sup>59</sup> Last, but not least, the Soviet side noted “that the UAR had scored major successes under the leadership of President Gamal Abdel Nasser in

consolidating its political and economic independence,”<sup>60</sup> and praised its “recent years’ broad socio-economic reforms and program of industrialization, nationalization and maximum development of the state sector.”<sup>61</sup> The impact of the new Moscow line on the attitudes of Arab communists was soon to be seen.

An article on Arab unity published in early 1964 by the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Jordanian Communist Party, Fuad Nassar, known to have been closely associated with Moscow’s line, seemed to present an interesting contrast with the Soviet arguments on Arab unity in 1958. The two trends of Arab unity – the bourgeoisie and feudal trends – were replaced by the reactionary right-wing bourgeois and the revolutionary-democratic trend.<sup>62</sup> Nassar argued that the objective of the national bourgeoisie was to capture the market. He pointed out:

The varying economic levels of these countries impel the bourgeoisie of each country to adopt a contradictory attitude towards Arab unity. They support unity and work for it to the extent to which it serves their particular ends. . . . Syrian bourgeoisie sought after the Second World War to establish unity with Iraq or Jordan because it wanted their markets for both Iraq and Jordan are economically less developed than Syria. In those days the Syrian bourgeoisie did not advocate unity with Egypt since she is industrially more advanced than Syria. The unity that later took place between Syria and Egypt not only ran counter to the interests of the masses, it also conflicted with the interests of the Syrian bourgeoisie. This contradiction between the bourgeoisie of Syria and Egypt was the basic reason for the collapse of the Syria–Egypt union in September 1961.<sup>63</sup>

Nassar also claimed that it was the contradiction between the Iraqi and Egyptian bourgeoisie that prevented Iraq from joining the UAR in 1958. However, forces of the right in every Arab bourgeoisie, he argued, will not hesitate to compromise, if by so doing they can strengthen their positions and deal a blow to democracy, and that was what happened during the Syria-Egypt union.<sup>64</sup> He further argued:

The basic problem for the Arab people today is not unification of the markets of the Arab countries on a capitalist basis and the creation of united bourgeois states, but complete liberation from imperialist domination and the establishment of national-democratic regimes. Only thus can the way be paved to voluntary unity between Arab countries on a basis of equality.<sup>65</sup>

Communist rhetoric regarding Arab unity and Arab nationalism seemed, at best, contradictory and, at worst, incohesive. The communists could not endorse Nassar’s vision and brand of Arab unity because the essence of



their argument emphasized, from the outset, differences among Arabs, namely class differences, instead of focusing on the similarities and the positive elements a union could achieve. It seemed, furthermore, that the communists could only view Nasser as a colonialist lord and Syria as the exploited subject. In the ideological rigidity of a bourgeois versus proletarian vision, the communists attacked Nasser and the UAR. The Arab communists, after several years of criticizing Nasser's concept of Arab unity, did a complete volte-face and began to praise the role of Nasser's regime in Arab unity. The Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Jordan, published in late 1964, presented the UAR as a progressive force that could promote Arab unity. It argued:

The cause of Arab unity is becoming more and more linked with the new developments taking place in the Arab world, and above all, with the profound progressive changes, political, economic and social, in the UAR and in the Algerian Republic, which have enriched the progressive content of the movement for Arab unity, and turned it into a movement for national and social emancipation.<sup>66</sup>

Apparently, this comment followed the 1964 Soviet praise of the UAR's progress in socio-economic changes. Once again Arab communists echoed Moscow's sentiments.

Fuad Nassar, writing in the fall of 1966, was, for once, quite enthusiastic about the role and prospects for the Arab national liberation movement. He noticed that:

the Arab national liberation movement . . . has swept the entire Arab world . . . has been joined by the masses of working people in town and countryside . . . [and] plays a vanguard role in the struggle of the peoples of Africa and [the] Middle East.<sup>67</sup>

He also praised Arab countries such as the UAR and Syria, "which not only enjoy political independence but which have advanced a long way along the road of economic emancipation . . . to build a new society and to withdraw completely from the orbit of world capitalism."<sup>68</sup>

Nassar further claimed to recognize the revolutionary anti-capitalist character of the Arab national liberation movement and its possibility for a non-capitalist path, even under non-communist leadership,<sup>69</sup> and, on Arab unity, expressed the opinion that, "the Arab peoples, irrespective of country, have a common destiny, and hence the evolution of their national and social aspirations inevitably makes for unity among them."<sup>70</sup>

The Arab communist answer to the shift of Soviet Middle Eastern policy was understandably favorable. Even before Khrushchev's visit in April, 1964, the meeting of representatives of the communist parties of Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan stated that:

the supreme national interests of the Arab nation and of its emancipatory democratic movement demand the provision of all conditions for the cooperation of the various national forces within every Arab country, for closer unity and cooperation between all the patriotic and democratic trends and progressive movements in the Arab world [urging] all the national forces of the Arab liberation movement, both at the governmental and other levels, [to] banish mutual mistrust, suspicions and estrangement and display the initiative for rapprochement and the longed for cooperation.<sup>71</sup>

The representatives of the Arab communist parties participating in the meeting considered Arab unity to be “one of the great goals of the democratic revolution in the Arab world” with “an emancipatory anti-imperialist content, on the one hand, and a profoundly progressive and democratic character, on the other.”<sup>72</sup> Consequently, their opinion was that it

can only be achieved through the efforts of the progressive forces of the nation – the workers, peasants, intellectuals, progressive officers, students, petit bourgeoisie and progressives from among the national bourgeoisie, . . . implementation of democratic and progressive measures in some Arab countries, or the establishment of a state of national democracy and the transition to the non-capitalist path of development can facilitate the achievement of unity.<sup>73</sup>

A meeting of representatives of all the communist parties of the Arab world, which took place in December, 1964, confirmed and further expanded the political directions adopted by the April, 1964 meeting. Arab communists, in their formal communiqué, noted that “socialism is increasingly becoming the cause, not only of the communists, but also of broad sections of non-communists, patriots, and revolutionaries,”<sup>74</sup> and “evaluated highly the experience of Algeria and the UAR” in their non-capitalist path of development.<sup>75</sup> However, they also stressed that

the revolutionary upswing in the Arab world is taking place at a time when the socialist world system, with the Soviet Union in the vanguard, is becoming the decisive factor of world development [and that] experience has shown that there is only one kind of socialism – scientific socialism, the main motive force in the realization of which are the workers, peasants and revolutionary intelligentsia.<sup>76</sup>

Many old problems remained unsolved and many new ones would emerge in the near future. Neither the enthusiasm of the moment nor the rhetoric of the political declarations was able to conceal, for long, the difficulties and latent tensions of the emerging triangle of complex relations among the

Soviets, the “progressive” Arab regimes, and the local Arab communists, the latter being the most exposed to the impact of these political vacillations.

The new tone was also visible in the resolutions of the Central Committee of the CPS in June, 1964, which hailed Khrushchev’s visit to the UAR as an event which “had opened a new page in the history of the relations between the Soviet and Arab peoples.”<sup>77</sup> The Syrian communists declared their support for the “positive changes in the domestic and foreign policy of Egypt . . . [which] will guarantee the consolidation of the achievements of the Egyptian people and will lead Egypt to the road of non-capitalist development towards socialism.”<sup>78</sup> They were also quite optimistic in their assessment of the situation of the Arab national liberation movement in general, stating that it “has registered important advances” and “its socio-political level has risen to a new stage.”<sup>79</sup> Consequently, they admitted “they are no longer the only national force advocating socialism and struggling for it” and extend “a fraternal hand to all those sincerely struggling for socialism and unity in attaining the noble common aim.”<sup>80</sup>

In September of the same year, the secretary general of the party, Khalid Bakdash, was even more outspoken, stating: “Our party is destined to play an important, though not necessarily the leading role, in the advance towards socialism, cooperating with all those who are working for socialism.”<sup>81</sup> He also expressed the CPS’s support for Arab unity, saying that “The idea of Arab unity stems from the objective factors of common history, common language and the geographical situation of the Arab countries.”<sup>82</sup> The Arab communists were even willing to admit that a “movement aimed at uniting the Arab peoples . . . is not the outcome of transient circumstances, or of the desires of one class or of one party,”<sup>83</sup> and, although they did not want to confuse the issue of unity with the “victory of socialism throughout the Arab world,”<sup>84</sup> they nevertheless perceived in it “a national democratic content” opening “the way of non-capitalist development.”<sup>85</sup> The Arab communists apparently followed the then fashionable Soviet theories on “revolutionary democracy” – a concept which considered the development of the Third World countries to be possible “along the non-capitalist path to eventual socialism and communism without communist leadership, at least initially.”<sup>86</sup>

Soviet acceptance of, and willingness to cooperate with, the Third World national liberation movements even led one Soviet scholar to argue that: “It would be the worst example of blind dogmatism, and the greatest strategic error in the struggle for socialist transformation of the world, to reject the revolutionary democrats because their views are at variance with Marxism.”<sup>87</sup> However, despite this apparent support, Soviet scholars and politicians remained cautious toward the Afro-Asian nationalisms.

According to leading Soviet theorist, Karen Brutents, the complexity of contemporary Afro-Asian nationalism was due to the fact that “it continues to combine, sometimes in a most bizarre fashion, progressive and reactionary elements, although the latter are frequently gaining strength.”<sup>88</sup>

The dilemmas involved were, in fact, never resolved until the very end of Soviet history, and their relations with the Third World national movements, in consequence, frequently suffered numerous changes and much uncertainty.

## **Palestine**

The problems of rigorous Arab communist adherence to the Soviet position on issues of both revolutionary strategy and developments in the Arab world are nowhere more clearly illustrated than in the context of the Palestine question. For Palestinian Arabs, the influx of Jewish immigrants into Palestine, and the declared aim of the Zionist movement and British government to transform the area into a Jewish national homeland, represented a fundamental threat to their desire and right to self-determination and national survival. The issue was also important as Palestine had long held a special place in Arab consciousness. It was considered the cross-roads of the Arab world – a land bridge between Arab East and Arab West – and it figured prominently in centuries of Arab history. To Arabs, events in Palestine represented the injustices of European colonialism, and the cause of the Palestinian people became a symbol of the struggle of the Arab people as a whole.

The issue of Palestine was another question to which the Soviet Union, given its other preoccupations, paid relatively little attention before the end of World War II. Soviet theorists and political leaders had basically followed the classic Marxist assumptions that the Jewish problem originated from the oppressive feudal and capitalist structures which imposed certain economic roles on the Jews, as a result making them easy victims to frequent popular discontent and hatred. The perceived solution was consequently inseparable from the more general questions of the proletarian revolution and creation of a classless, socialist society, which eliminated the drive for profit and the capitalist culture on which this was based.<sup>89</sup>

In the new society, national differences and antagonisms between the peoples were also expected to disappear, and to be replaced by the “international culture of a socialist proletariat that is democratic in the core.”<sup>90</sup> As early as 1903, Lenin condemned the Zionist idea of a separate Jewish nation as “utterly untenable scientifically . . . [and] entirely false and reactionary in its essence.”<sup>91</sup> After the issuance of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, Zionists began to be additionally condemned for an alliance with British imperialism, and identified as enemies of the anti-imperialist Soviet foreign policy.<sup>92</sup> Zionist activities in Russia had nevertheless continued relatively freely until July, 1920, after which most “bourgeois” Zionist organizations had been suppressed.<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless, the Soviet government “was not eager to incur the wrath of world Jewry because of a handful of Russian Zionists”<sup>94</sup> and, in February, 1921, the Soviet Foreign Minister, Chicherin, assured a visiting Zionist representative that “if sometimes repression has

been ordered against some bourgeois element among the Zionists, it was the consequence of crimes committed by these elements, but the repression was never directed against the principles of Zionism itself.”<sup>95</sup> The left-wing Zionist groups, such as Poale Zion and the Hechalutz Pioneer Movement, were consequently allowed to continue to operate, and for some time had even received positive encouragement from the Soviet authorities.<sup>96</sup> Until 1926, the Soviets also kept open their channel of communication with the Zionist leaders<sup>97</sup> and, in the summer of 1924, invited the Histadrut from Palestine to participate in the International Agricultural Exhibition in Moscow.<sup>98</sup> It was not until the late 1920s that a tough, and consequently anti-Zionist, policy, took over in the Soviet Union as part of the general Stalinist drive against ethnic and religious minorities in the country. All Zionist organizations were then suppressed in the Soviet Union and all previous international contacts with Jewish-Zionist groupings came, for the time being, to an end.<sup>99</sup>

However, Soviet communist ideological and political opposition to Zionism had obviously not been caused by any special concern about the rights of the Palestinian Arabs, and their subsequent support of them was rather insignificant. Insofar as the Arab leadership in Palestine received any attention, they were regarded with the same suspicion accorded to other national bourgeoisies; only in their opposition to imperialism could they be regarded as “progressive.” During this period, the major Soviet links to the Palestine issue were the Comintern and local communist parties.

The first communist party in Palestine – the Mifleget Poalim Sozialistim Ha-Ivriyim (MPSI–Hebrew Socialist Workers’ Party) – was formally established in September, 1920 by immigrant Jews, many of whom were products of eastern European radical movements associated with the left wing of the Poale Zion (Workers of Zion).

The Party’s most important achievement was its decision to begin to recruit Arab members by opposing Jewish immigration as an economic threat to Arab workers. The Palestinian Arabs saw these immigrants as a threat to their jobs and land, and the party wanted to find a way of influencing them on the basis of the defense of their national rights and ethnic interests. Though the effort largely failed, and even resulted in some negative Arab reactions, the foundations for further communist influence among the Arab population were laid. However, in 1921, the party was suppressed by the British authorities because of its involvement in clashes with moderate Jewish socialist groups during May Day riots.

Following the collapse of the MPSI, members moved to rejoin the left wing of the Poale Zion and formed a bloc called the Workers’ Faction, actually a clandestine Palestine Communist Party (PCP) within the Poale Zion. The PCP was predominantly Jewish in composition, but it soon received instructions from the Comintern to increase its Arab membership significantly if it had any desire to become part of the Communist International.

The PCP was seen by Moscow as a progressive party with high revolutionary potential despite its often conciliatory line on Zionism and Jewish immigration to Palestine. Still, some of the party's leadership (all of whom were Jews) were not pleased with the Comintern's emphasis on increasing Arab membership. The most prominent of these was Nahum List, who believed that increasing the party's Arab membership would diminish its influence among Jews and ultimately destroy the movement. Moreover, List did not believe the effort would be successful because of the small number of Arabs who were actually involved in the movement. None of the party's leadership were Arabs, and the number of Arabs who were party members was minuscule.<sup>100</sup> The Comintern not only directed the PCP to increase its support among Palestinian Arabs, but also encouraged it to work toward strengthening and organizing the relatively backward communist movement in Syria and Egypt. Yet, these requirements would have forced the PCP to abandon its moderate position on Zionism and immigration if it were also to attempt to have any influence and legitimacy among Arabs. The PCP realized this and soon began to alter its position on these issues by increasing its anti-Zionist rhetoric. Zionism was now defined as the primary method of the Jewish bourgeoisie to create a market for its own benefit. Zionism was also closely linked to British imperialism as a method of British control. In addition, the PCP began to step up its attacks on Arab landowners who sold land to Jews, calling them reactionaries in league with the forces of Zionism and imperialism. Thus, through redefining its stance on Zionism, Jewish immigration to Palestine, and the sale of Arab lands to Jews, the movement found itself diametrically opposed to the combined British, Zionist, and wealthy Arab forces. The PCP's only allies were working-class Arabs and Jews and, increasingly in the late 1920s, the growing Arab nationalist movement, which was seen as a tactical partner in the battle against the forces of reaction.

By 1923, the party began to show the effects of this increased Arabization. At the party's Fifth Congress, the PCP, for the first time, allowed an Arab delegate to speak. The delegate, a railway worker from Haifa, spoke to the party's Jewish delegates on the conditions of Arab workers and how the PCP could attract more Arabs to the party.<sup>101</sup> More interestingly, though, the largest effect of Arabization was the dramatic loss of interest by Jews in the party. Once Arabization became a primary focus of the party during 1923–1924, the party claimed to have only 20–30 percent of the number of members it had claimed just a year earlier.<sup>102</sup> So, although the PCP was successful in gaining official status from the Comintern, the ultimate effect of its efforts was a reduction of the party's overall strength, influence, and legitimacy among Jews to the point where the Workers' Faction, which was affiliated with the PCP, was expelled from the *Histadrut* in April, 1924.<sup>103</sup> Despite Soviet acceptance, a greatly weakened PCP had become torn apart by internal dissension.

With its admission into the Comintern, the PCP began a transitional period in which its leadership and membership began to shift from being predominantly Jewish to being predominantly Arab. Lasting roughly a decade, this transitional period saw increasingly greater numbers of Arabs joining the party with the best and brightest of these people being sent to the University of the Toilers of the East in Moscow for three years of ideological training. They, and smaller numbers of Jews, were expected to learn how to apply Marxist and Leninist theory to the realities of life in Palestine, so that when they returned they would be ready to assume the leadership of the party. At the same time, they were taught the Stalinist line on Palestine, which, especially during the mid-1920s, emphasized the dual nature of Palestinian society, composed of revolutionary and counter-revolutionary elements within each ethnic group. Thus, Arab landowners were viewed as being as great a threat as British colonial rulers and Zionists. On the other hand, the progressive nature of some Jewish Palestinian immigrants was also recognized, meaning that the possibility of a united front strategy was very real. In addition, Soviet policy was changing so that, by 1925, the Soviet Union had denounced Zionism, the occupation of Palestine, and the Jewish Labour Party, while it simultaneously began to accelerate its domestic repression of the Zionist movement.

The transitional period was filled with activity for the party. The two most notable events during the mid- to late 1920s were the Afula incident of 1924 and the 1929 clashes at Wadi Hawarit, located between Haifa and Tel Aviv, where Arab peasants were evicted from their land by what the party called “Zionist acts of conquest.” These two incidents became great focusing elements for the party and resulted in a growth in support for the communist movement. By late 1927, events elsewhere had a substantial impact on the theoretical and practical aspects of Soviet policy in Palestine when, with the defeat of the Chinese communists by the Kuomintang, the Soviets were forced to rethink their policy on the united front approach in Palestine. The definition of ally and enemy was narrowed considerably, and party leaders were ordered to reorganize themselves into a more tightly knit, more secretive organization, which became further isolated from the larger Jewish community in the country, and even more strongly opposed to Zionist aims and all Jewish immigration to Palestine. Thus, the seeds of Arabization were even more deeply sown.

The hardening of the movement began on August 1, 1929, hailed as Comintern Day by the PCP. Accompanying the celebration of the admission of the party into the Comintern, the party announced new, more revolutionary slogans that called for land redistribution, agrarian revolt, opposition to both clerical and secular leaders of the Arab nationalist movement, and support for the establishment of a government of workers and peasants. However, while these changes were underway, the process of actually Arabizing the party was lagging seriously behind.

By September, 1929, the Comintern had decided to advocate a new course of action for the Palestine Communist Party. Henceforth, the PCP was to assume a vanguard role in revolutionary activity in Palestine, to increase its recruitment of Arab members, and to purge its ranks of those who refused to accept the PCP's new position. This was dramatically demonstrated in the aftermath of the August, 1929 riots when the PCP leadership opposed the Arab riots because they considered them to be the beginnings of a pogrom against the Jews.<sup>104</sup> The leadership, still overwhelmingly Jewish, was reprimanded by the executive committee of the Comintern, days after the uprising, in the body's document, *Achievement and Defects of the Party*, which stated that the party had failed to respond properly to the uprising

because it is composed in the main of Jewish elements and it has no contact with the Arab masses as a whole . . . [which is] a result of the party's failure to steer a bold and determined course towards the Arabization of the party from top to bottom.<sup>105</sup>

Although the process of Arabization had begun, it had clearly not advanced to the extent desired by the Comintern. In the same document, the party was directed to follow a bolder and more energetic course toward Arabization, to link up more closely with developing elements of the movement elsewhere in the Arab world, and to weed out pro-Zionist sympathizers in the party. Clearly, the Jewish nature of the party was seen as having a detrimental effect on the movement in Palestine, and its overall relationship with the Comintern.

Supported by the Comintern, Arab members of the party began to assume control of the movement between 1930 and 1932. Jewish leaders of the PCP were recalled to Moscow and were soon replaced by Moscow-designated Arabs. In addition, the rank and file was increasingly Arabized under the PCP slogan "Arabization plus Bolshevization." By the party's Seventh Congress in 1930, there were, for the first time, an equal number of Arab and Jewish delegates (see Appendix 3, p. 143). This change had a dramatic effect on the party's policies regarding Zionism and Jewish immigration. All immigration was now opposed and Arabs were urged to "guard the ports, prevent Jews from landing and force the ships carrying Jewish immigrants to go back where they came from."<sup>106</sup> In addition, the party's critique of Zionist and British imperialism and Arab reactionism was stepped up and, for the first time, the PCP developed a definitely pro-Arab-oriented political program.

Published in 1931, the theses approved by the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Palestine approvingly quoted the Comintern characterization of Zionism as being: "the expression of the exploiting and great power oppressive strivings of the Jewish bourgeoisie, which makes use of the persecution of the Jewish national minorities



in Eastern Europe for the purpose of imperialistic policy to ensure its domination.”<sup>107</sup> According to the Party:

The second stage of Zionist occupation is the expropriation of the Arab peasants and the colonization of these regions with Jews, the crowding out of Arab workers and their replacement with Jews, the crowding out of Arab small businessmen and artisans and the strengthening of Jewish capital.<sup>108</sup>

The Party noted that even now:

the Jewish colonist is by no means an oppressed peasant – compared with the Arab, . . . on the average, the basic capital of the Jewish peasant (per capita) in Palestine amounts in Zionist colonies to £1000, whereas the basic capital of fellah (together with the family) amounts to from £20 to £30.<sup>109</sup>

The Jewish farmer had also secured access to schools and hospitals and, as a class, constituted “a solid support for the Jewish bourgeoisie against the Arab toilers.”<sup>110</sup> And yet, the Palestinian communists thought that:

. . . it would be very erroneous to regard imperialism, Zionism, and the Jewish population solely as one organic whole (which, for the time being they are with regard to the Arab masses), among whom there are no internal contradictions which undermine these oppressive forces from within.<sup>111</sup>

The PCP policy was to consider carefully these internal social contradictions in order to make use of them in their political struggle. They also wanted to focus their attention on such issues.

Though the party was fundamentally opposed to the goals of the Arab nationalist movement, it did forge a very important and influential tactical alliance with the Palestinian Istiqlal Party in the 1930s. By 1934, the PCP Politburo had a majority of Arab members; however, despite this, it generally failed in its efforts to achieve mass support from Palestinian Arabs. By the mid-1930s, the small number of Arab communists affiliated with the Palestine Communist Party had turned to Palestine’s Pan-Arab Istiqlal Party in pursuance of the struggle against British rule and the Zionist settlers.<sup>112</sup> As a result, links between the communists and the left wing of the Istiqlal were particularly strong, as there were many overlapping policies and, in some cases, even overlapping memberships. Together, both movements sponsored a series of strikes, which ultimately erupted into riots during the 1930s. These riots were directed against both Jewish immigrants and British colonial authority, and were influential in curtailing some forms of immigration.

Communist influence increased even more during the Arab Rebellions in the mid- to late 1930s as the PCP made important contacts with Arab guerrilla groups. The PCP even formed a communist guerrilla group dedicated to armed resistance aimed at eliminating both British interests and Zionists of all ideological stripes. There was, for the first time, no differentiation between left- and right-wing Zionists – from Palestine. As the PCP Central Committee stated in 1936, “The task of the Arab members of the PCP is to actively participate in the destruction of Zionism and imperialism.”<sup>113</sup>

The movement suffered a severe blow in 1937, when its Arab leader, Ridwan Hilu (known as Musa), was arrested by the British for his part in the PCP’s opposition to British authority. After Musa’s arrest, the Jewish section of the party regained a degree of influence, though it walked a fine line between its Jewish leadership, the demands of the Arab rank and file, and the desires of the Comintern. In practical terms, however, the activities of the party were severely hampered by divisions within the party between the Jewish section, which was still wedded to the idea that some immigration was needed, and the Arab section, which argued the hard line. When Musa was released from prison in 1939, hopes were high that a compromise between the factions could be worked out, but his efforts were ultimately undermined by the efforts of Bulos Farah (Amin), who, having just returned from Moscow, and under instructions from the Comintern, urged the PCP Central Committee to harden its attitude against Zionist “deviations.” Amin also argued that Arabs represented the only progressive force in the movement and that Arabs alone had any real revolutionary potential. The party thus returned to vociferous denunciations of Zionism and immigration, but the violent events of the late-1930s proved so damaging that the unity of the movement in the 1940s was ultimately undermined.

Communist activities in Palestine increased greatly in the 1940s as a result of the easing of British restrictions due to Britain’s preoccupation with the war effort. The greatest expansion in interest was among Arab intellectuals, who formed numerous Marxist clubs and societies. At the same time, numbers in the Arab proletariat were also increasing dramatically and, though the movement was unable to capture the support of a majority of this class, the PCP was influential in increasing trade union activity.

The PCP was not as influential in expanding communist sympathy as was the National Liberation League – a political organization that developed out of the Arab Rays of Hope Society (NLL). The NLL was composed of intellectuals and urban workers who sought to unite the communist movement with the left wing of the nationalist movement. Some younger Arab leaders of the PCP, including Amin, Musa Dajani, Tawfik Tubi, and Fuad Nassar were active in its organization. The NLL’s contribution to the communist movement in Palestine is significant because of its views on

the rights of Jews in Palestine. The party accepted that Jews had civil rights in Palestine, but rejected the concept, still held by some Jewish members of the PCP, that Jews had national rights to live in Palestine. It rejected the use of terrorism and instead argued that the Palestinian problem be placed before the newly formed United Nations.

Unlike other Arab movements, the NLL realized that the outcome of World War II would have dramatic and lasting effects on the future of Palestine. Over time, the communist elements of the NLL overshadowed the nationalist elements, and the party became more explicitly communist, soon absorbed various minor communist splinter groups, and expanded its trade union activity. However, while it seems to have had significant support,<sup>114</sup> it did not achieve official recognition from either Moscow or among the Arab working class and was largely an intellectual movement that eventually emerged as the semi-official Arab communist vehicle only after the PCP split into Arab and Jewish factions in the summer of 1943.

The history of the NLL is a history of opposition both to the Zionist goal of the transformation of Palestine into a Jewish state, and to the mainstream of the Arab nationalist movement. The NLL demanded immediate termination of the British mandate and the creation of an independent Palestinian state with authority to decide on immigration and land sales.<sup>115</sup> On the other hand, however, the NLL distinguished between the Zionist movement and the Jewish inhabitants of Palestine, and believed in the common anti-imperialist solidarity and struggle of both peoples.<sup>116</sup> The NLL was deeply affected, though, by international events. For example, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko's May, 1947 speech before the UN General Assembly clearly indicated that the Soviets agreed with the Zionists on some important issues, and hinted at support for some Jewish national demands.

Although Andrei Gromyko, the Soviet representative, still stressed his preference for an "independent democratic Arab-Jewish state," nevertheless he had also admitted the possibility of a partition of Palestine into separate Arab and Jewish states. The speech, and the subsequent major policy transformations of the previous Soviet policy toward the Palestinian question, and the Middle East in general, produced an understandable uproar among the communist parties in the area, initially causing them to split into numerous groups regarding the interpretation of Soviet policy and a new political line for the future. The NLL split between those like Fuad Nassar, Emile Habibi, Tawfiq Tubi, and Rushdi Shahin, who accepted the shift in policy, and the majority of the members led by Emile Tuma, Bulus Farah, Musa Dajani, and others, who completely rejected the tenets of the Gromyko pronouncement.<sup>117</sup>

The Soviet's turnabout, which some have argued was designed to weaken the Conservative Arab regimes and thus to create a better chance for the progressive Arab nationalist movement,<sup>118</sup> indicated, however, that the

Soviets would support a Jewish state should partition occur. With regard to Palestine and the Arab reaction to the formation of the state of Israel in 1948, Moscow had seriously misread the mood of the Arab world, but the communist parties existing in the region finally had no choice but to follow the fluctuations of the Soviet policy. In early October, 1948, in view of the Arab defeat and the dispersion of the Palestine Arab population, the NLL, together with the Iraqi, Lebanese, and Syrian Communist Parties, issued a joint communiqué condemning the Arab states' military intervention in Palestine and accepting partition.

The partition of Palestine was justified, however, not by any independent analysis of the local situation and general ideological principles, but as an act of "support for the stand of the Soviet Union, the leader of the world progressive forces."<sup>119</sup> Even earlier, in August, 1948, the NLL started unification talks with the PCP, which at that time was almost entirely Jewish and strongly pro-Israel. On October 22, 1948, the "New All-Israel Communist Party" (MAKI) was established as a result of a merger of the PCP and the NLL, the latter being in quite an obviously subservient position.<sup>120</sup>

The newly proclaimed façade of unity of the communist movement in the country could not, however, contain the underlying essential differences of views and interests between its Arab and Jewish members. The Arab acceptance of Israel and its political system was conditioned by their expectations of the class solidarity of Jewish and Arab workers in their struggle for full democratic rights for Israel's Arab citizens and the implementation of the rights of the Palestinian people to national self-determination in the form of an independent state.<sup>121</sup> However, as the time passed it became obvious that the Jewish side, because of domestic developments in Israel, and weakening communist influence among the local Jewish population, was apparently unable to keep its part of the "bargain." In fact, in order to get closer to the existing Israeli national consensus, and to avoid total isolation within the Jewish community, MAKI in the 1960s even started to withdraw from its previous support of the Palestinians.<sup>122</sup>

At the same time, however, the Arab side of the party, because of the policy inaugurated by the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU of solidarity with the Third World peoples, and the then good Soviet relations with the Arab nationalists who were led by Nasser, was also much more outspoken and self-confident than in the previous period. These differences came into the open, and, on August 3, 1965, the party split again between the mainly Arab Rakah, headed by Vilner and Tubi, and the entirely Jewish MAKI.<sup>123</sup> Although the essential differences between both parties had not initially been very clearly expressed, nevertheless they came visibly and forcefully to the fore in June, 1967, when MAKI justified the Israeli military actions, and the following outbreak of the Arab-Israeli war, as legitimate Israeli national self-defense. When Rakah was recognized by Moscow as the

official Communist Party of Israel, by supporting the Arab world at that time, MAKI underwent further internal divisions and, in 1975, finally completely disappeared from Israeli politics.<sup>124</sup> Rakah has consistently enjoyed the support of most Arabs in Israel, though the labor party initially attracted many. However, the demographic realities of Israel and its electoral process have meant that Rakah has been unable to be anything more than a minor player in Israeli politics. Its anti-Zionist stance, and at many times pro-nationalist leanings, have clearly resulted in its becoming a semi-official representative of most of Israel's Arab population. Thus, practical considerations can be said to have played a much greater role in Arab communist support than does ideology.

Throughout its existence, the Palestine Communist Party (like other Arab communist parties) faithfully followed Moscow's lead. Accordingly, the PCP initiated implementation of the Comintern Sixth Congress resolutions, along with their warnings against cooperation with national bourgeoisies early in 1929. A campaign against the traditional, nationalist, Palestinian Arab leadership was launched, and the joint class struggle by Jewish and Arab proletariats was emphasized. A few months later, the Jerusalem riots erupted, accompanied by Arab–Jewish violence which threw the PCP into confusion, provoking an acrimonious debate among Moscow's Middle East specialists.<sup>125</sup> When the 1936–1939 Palestine revolt broke out, the USSR and the PCP largely supported it, causing the latter to lose many Jewish members. By the end of 1938, however, the USSR's fight against fascism, combined with the pro-German sympathies of many Palestinian nationalist leaders, had led the USSR to condemn the Revolt's leader, Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini, as a fascist agent. Subsequently, the PCP also expressed some concern about the "fascist infiltration" of the revolt.<sup>126</sup> However, the Mufti was partially rehabilitated in Soviet statements after August, 1939 (coinciding with the signing of the Soviet–German Pact), only to once more be condemned following the German invasion of the USSR in June, 1941.<sup>127</sup>

By this time, the polarization in Palestine between Arab nationalists and Zionists, Zionists and communists, and Arab nationalists and communists, the PCP's vacillation on Arab–Zionist issues, and schisms within the PCP, effectively sounded its death-knell. Separate Jewish and Arab organizations thereafter arose in its place. In any event, the intensity and focus of the Soviet Union's Palestine policy changed with the war and its aftermath. After 1941, the USSR, anxious to secure Jewish support for the Soviet war effort, effectively suspended its criticism of Zionism. Indeed, several statements and actions by Soviet spokespersons during this period even seemed to support Zionist aspirations in Palestine.<sup>128</sup> Nevertheless, such a suspension of Soviet anti-Zionism appeared tactical rather than ideological in nature, and, with the war's end, Soviet condemnation of Zionist aspirations returned.<sup>129</sup>

When Britain referred the Palestine issue to the UN in 1947, however, the USSR supported Zionist demands for Jewish statehood, and voted for the UN Partition Plan. Nevertheless, such actions did not indicate sympathy for Zionism, but, rather, were the result of several political factors. First, the conservative pro-Western Arab governments were all staunchly anti-Soviet in their international relations, and anti-communist in their domestic policies, vigorously suppressing domestic communist parties and groups after World War II. Second, the Zionists were anti-British and frequently left-wing; the Soviet Union may have looked forward to a weakening of the British position in the Middle East and the establishment of a progressive Jewish state in Palestine. Third, the Soviet Union may have sought to aggravate differences between Britain and the US over the Palestine issue.<sup>130</sup>

Walter Laqueur has proposed a fourth, and rather novel, suggestion; namely, that the Palestine issue had so little relevance for the geopolitical preoccupations of the Soviet leadership that the pro-partition policy may have been proposed and accepted at a relatively junior level.<sup>131</sup>

Regardless of the reasons, the USSR supported the establishment of the Jewish state. *De jure* recognition was granted to Israel within two days of the unilateral Zionist proclamation of the creation of Israel on May 14, 1948. The subsequent Arab armed mobilization and declaration of war in defense of Arab Palestine was condemned by Moscow as “an aggressive war against the legally constituted state of Israel,”<sup>132</sup> and it can safely be assumed that the Czech arms deliveries to Israel during the 1948 war received Moscow’s approval.<sup>133</sup> Such a position, needless to say, threw the Arab communist parties into confusion, severely damaging their appeal within the Arab world.

The Soviet Union’s relations with Israel, however, cooled significantly by the end of 1948, as Israel normalized relations with the West (including Britain). By 1953, Soviet–Israeli tensions over the so-called Moscow “Doctors’ Plot,” and the subsequent bombing of the Soviet embassy in Israel, had led the USSR to suspend diplomatic relations briefly. The years 1953–1955 saw a perceptible transformation of Soviet attitudes toward the Arab countries, and Third World peoples in general. Feeling threatened by the American policy of containment, and the ensuing surrounding of their territories by a ring of Western bases, the Soviets, in order to find some counterbalance, urgently needed to find allies, even in the areas not directly adjoining their borders.<sup>134</sup>

Their efforts were made possible, and largely facilitated, by two simultaneous, even though unrelated, developments. First, the time seemed particularly propitious, and circumstances promising, for their new Third World activism. Further, the quite recent fall of the British and French empires at this time liberated a number of Afro-Asian peoples, many of whose leaders were staunchly anti-imperialist, and not without sympathies toward the Soviet anti-Western ideology and policies. The very volatile

situation of the newly independent Third World countries, although undoubtedly quite complex and greatly differentiated, also seemed to indicate some new and previously unknown possibilities for the expansion of Soviet ideology, and the implementation of the socialist political and social structures. Second, the apparent growth of the Soviet economic and military potential and the development of thermonuclear and ICBM delivery capacity, provided the Soviets with both the means and the confidence to embark upon a path of aggressive global expansion. Due both to its geopolitical proximity and strategic importance, and also to its rapid socio-political transformations and ideological upheavals, the Arab Middle East was naturally destined to become one of the first and most important Soviet targets.<sup>135</sup>

Evidence of the shift that was taking place in Soviet policy toward the Arab–Israeli dispute came on January 22, 1954, when the USSR vetoed a Western draft resolution concerning the Israeli plan for digging a canal in the demilitarized zone on the Syrian–Israeli border and the diversion of a large part of the River Jordan’s water for Israeli usage.<sup>136</sup> On March 29, 1954, the USSR again vetoed a Security Council resolution condemning Egypt for failing to comply with a 1951 UN resolution concerning Israeli freedom of navigation through the Straits of Tirane and the Suez Canal – an earlier resolution on which the USSR had abstained. By 1955, Czechoslovakia was, with Soviet blessing, supplying Egypt with arms. Then the 1956 Suez Crisis witnessed the severing of Soviet–Israeli diplomatic relations, vigorous Soviet denouncements of the tripartite invasion of Egypt, and hints that Soviet “volunteers” might be sent to assist Egypt.

Such shifts in Soviet policy toward the region were followed – rather than preceded – by changes in Soviet ideological statements on the subject, thus reinforcing the view that practical calculations, rather than Marxist–Leninist analysis, were responsible for Moscow’s changing position. As Walter Z. Laqueur once noted, the task of being a Soviet political analyst and commentator was “less similar to that of prophet than to the lawyer who has to think of explanations and justifications [in order to rationalize] unexpected developments in Leninist terms, of squaring them with official Soviet ideology.”<sup>137</sup> And yet, the Soviet analyst’s role was still essentially to “formulate a long-term design for Soviet policy as a response to the opportunities in the Middle East and elsewhere in the Third World.”<sup>138</sup> Their views and differences of opinion, which grew constantly as time went on, also reflected “*grosso modo*, the conflicting ideas and moods prevailing in the [Soviet] leadership”<sup>139</sup> in its uneasy dealings with the Middle Eastern challenges, and the Third World in general. In the years to come, two major issues pinpoint the attention of the Soviet ideologists: the issue of the Arab national liberation movement with the ensuing questions of Arab unity and the non-capitalist path of development, and, next, the Palestinian issue and the Arab–Israeli conflict.

As in many other aspects of Soviet ideology and policy, the Twentieth CPSU Congress in 1956 marked a watershed in Soviet relations toward the Third World peoples' struggle, which was increasing at that time. For the first time since the late 1920s, the Soviets took a positive stand toward the Afro-Asian national liberation movements, which had been previously condemned as bourgeois in their social content, and praised the policy of non-alignment which had recently been proclaimed at the 1955 Bandung conference. The ensuing period, especially up to the June, 1967 Arab–Israeli war, saw further theoretical and practical elaboration, and an expansion of the implications of the new attitude, which, however, had never been free from ambiguity and unsolved internal contradictions.

Until the mid-1950s, for example, blame for the 1948 Palestine war had been ascribed by Soviet analysts to either the Arab states (1948–1950) or to the Arab states and Israel (1950–1955). After the establishment of friendly Soviet–Egyptian relations, however, the 1948 War was reinterpreted as an example of Israeli aggression, whereby the Zionist state sought to capitalize on the weakness of the nascent Arab nationalist movement.<sup>140</sup> Nonetheless, despite its support for the Arab world, the USSR did not deviate from its acceptance of Israel's existence. The Soviet position was that Zionism, Israel's current leadership, and Western imperialism were responsible for Israel's aggressive policies and "if the big powers did not interfere, the Arab countries and Israel would reach agreement more quickly by themselves."<sup>141</sup>

For a long time, the Soviet Union also did not want to support the condemnation of Zionism by the UN bodies, and the Soviet media did not publicize the ongoing discussion about identification of Zionism, anti-Semitism, and Nazism as racist ideologies.<sup>142</sup> A progressive, non-Zionist, anti-imperialist Israel,<sup>143</sup> and a "mutually acceptable" solution to the Palestine question,<sup>144</sup> held out the greatest hope of peace for the region according to current Soviet axioms.

Between the 1956 and the 1967 Arab–Israeli wars, the pattern and content of Soviet diplomacy in this area remained essentially the same. Military and political support by the USSR for the "progressive" Arab regimes, and Soviet condemnation of Zionism and Israel's imperialist role, were combined with a basic acceptance of Israel's existence, and a declared preference for a "peaceful settlement" based on "negotiations and agreement with [Israel's] Arab neighbours."<sup>145</sup> During the 1967 war itself, the USSR condemned Israel's aggression, supplied both Egypt and Syria with military hardware, and supported the Security Council's repeated calls for a ceasefire.

An emergency meeting of communist parties and governments was held in Moscow on June 9 to discuss the eruption of the war and a statement issued at the conclusion of the conference warned:



If the government of Israel does not stop the aggression and withdraw its troops behind the truce line, the socialist states which signed this statement will do everything necessary to help the people of the Arab countries to administer a resolute rebuff to the aggressor, to protect their lawful rights, to extinguish the hotbed of war in the Near East, and restore peace in that area.<sup>146</sup>

This condemnation was virtually identical to the Soviet Union's earlier position, which was clearly described in a resolution adopted by the Central Committee of the CPSU on June 21, 1967:

[The Central Committee resolves] fully to approve the political line and practical activities of the Politburo of the Central Committee aimed at cutting short Israeli aggression, at supporting the United Arab Republic, Syria, and other Arab states subjected to attack, and at averting the dangerous consequences of aggression to the cause of universal peace.<sup>147</sup>

Pravda continued:

The Israeli aggression is the result of a collusion of the most reactionary forces of international imperialism, primarily the United States, against one of the detachments of the national liberation movement, and against the advanced Arab states, which have embarked upon the path of progressive social and economic transformations in the interests of working people, and which pursue an anti-imperialist policy.<sup>148</sup>

Subsequently to this, the Soviet Union's attitude toward the Arab–Israeli conflict was demonstrated in the UN Security Council debate concerning the principles for just and lasting peace in the Middle East. A Soviet draft resolution (S/8253) stressed that “the seizure of territories as a result of war is inadmissible” and called for an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories and a “just settlement of the question of the Palestine refugees,” while recognizing the right of “all States as members of the United Nations” to “exist as independent national States and live in peace and security [including Israel].”<sup>149</sup> The British-sponsored resolution eventually adopted by the Council – Security Council Resolution 242 – was broadly similar in content, and was supported by the USSR.

## **4 The Soviet Union and Arab issues: 1967–1984**

During the October, 1973 Arab–Israeli War, the Soviet Union again extended military and diplomatic support and material assistance to its regional allies, Egypt and Syria, and also expanded its relations with Iraq, South Yemen, Libya, and Algeria. It endorsed the UN Security Council’s calls for an immediate ceasefire, and negotiations on the basis of Security Council Resolution 242, while upholding both Israel’s right to exist and Moscow’s recognition of the Palestinians as a “people” or “nation” entitled to exercise their right to self-determination alongside Israel. While the Israelis failed to respond to the Security Council’s pleas, pressing on with their advance, the Soviet Union lent strong support to the call of the Geneva Peace Conference, for a framework whereby all parties to the conflict would discuss a regional peace. However, in spite of those considerable efforts during and after the Yom Kippur war, a noticeable decline in Moscow’s influence could be seen in the Middle East region. The Egyptian gambit to come to a unilateral peace with Israel under Anwar Sadat altered the strategic balance in the region from 1970, and increasing differences both between the USSR and friendly Arab states and among Arab states themselves, contributed to the accelerated decline of the Soviet influence in the region in the late 1970s and early 1980s. By the onset of Glasnost and Perestroika, Soviet influence had waned even further, with many Arab states preferring to ally with Western powers, including the United States, primarily due to economic incentives. The collapse of the Soviet Union, following its prominence as a co-sponsor of the Madrid Peace Conference at the conclusion of the Gulf War, brought an end to the intricate history of Soviet–Arab relations.

### **The 1973 war and after**

At first glance, the October, 1973 Arab–Israeli war would seem to have provided all of the elements necessary for the further expansion of Soviet influence in the Middle East. Much more so than in 1967, the USSR had proven itself this time a staunch supporter of the Arab cause. Upon the outbreak of the war on October 6, the USSR accused Israel of bearing full

responsibility for the conflict, condemned Israel's "constant provocations," "obstructionist position," and "expansionist policy," and stressed that the Soviet Union was a "reliable friend of the Arab states."<sup>1</sup> The Soviet Union also began a massive air- and sea-lift of military equipment to Egypt and Syria: between October 10 and mid-November, some 30 freighters and 1000 air flights transferred approximately 100,000 tons of war *matériel* to the Arab states.<sup>2</sup> Later, when it became obvious in the second week of the war that the Arab military position was deteriorating, the USSR placed some of its airborne forces on alert while pressing for a ceasefire, both in public statements and at the UN. On October 24, the USSR reacted to Israel's refusal to obey UN Security Council ceasefire resolutions by warning US President Nixon that, if the United States did not act jointly with the USSR in bringing the fighting to an end, the latter would "consider the question of taking appropriate steps unilaterally."<sup>3</sup> For its part, the United States' firm support for Israel was even more apparent during the war: it lent massive diplomatic and material support to Israel, and responded to the Soviet warning on October 24 by placing both conventional and nuclear forces on alert so as to deter Soviet intervention. Because of its continued backing of Israel, the United States (along with Portugal and the Netherlands) was made a primary target of the Arab oil embargo of 1973–1974.

Yet, despite this massive support, the Soviet Union's position in the Middle East declined sharply after 1973 – particularly in Egypt, which had, despite differences in the early 1970s, remained the strongest Soviet partner in the region. A number of factors can be seen as having led to this deterioration. First, and perhaps most important, the Soviet Union was unable to affect the policies of its erstwhile Egyptian ally – policies that moved post-Nasser Egypt increasingly into a Western orbit as the 1970s progressed. Before the war, relations between Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and the USSR were damaged by the former's perception of Soviet support for his domestic opponents (notably Ali Sabri), by Soviet support of the unsuccessful 1971 coup in the Sudan, and by Soviet restrictions on arms transfers. The expulsion of Soviet technicians from Egypt in 1972 provided stark evidence of the deteriorated state of USSR–Egyptian relations. After the 1973 war, Sadat initiated a diplomatic strategy predicated on the assumption that only the United States could exert sufficient leverage over Israel to secure Israeli withdrawal from occupied Egyptian territory, and achieve a negotiated settlement – a belief, in other words, that the road to the Sinai (if not to Palestine) lay through Washington. According to Muhammad Ibrahim Kamil, who served as Egyptian Foreign Minister from December, 1977 until September, 1978:

[Sadat] was a true believer that his [peace] initiative could not fail, and that the theory of the two superpowers was a false one as there is only one superpower, and that is the USA. It alone would be able, and could

guarantee to carry his initiative toward its goal of achieving a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.<sup>4</sup>

In order to achieve his objective, however, Egyptian–American relations would have to be improved, and Sadat felt this could be done through reducing and finally eliminating Soviet–Egyptian ties and actively opposing Soviet influence in the region. In Kamil’s words, “Sadat was under the impression that the more he attacked the Soviets, the more America would support him.”<sup>5</sup>

For the duration of the decade, Egypt’s progress toward a separate peace treaty with Israel occurred simultaneously with (and as a result of) Egypt’s realignment with the West. Sadat’s announcement that he would seek arms from the West, and his promulgation of an “open door” economic policy to attract foreign investment (1974), his abrogation of the Egyptian–Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation (1976), the cessation of Egyptian cotton exports to the USSR, and the suspension of Egypt’s servicing of its Soviet debt (1977), and, finally, Sadat’s increasingly harsh anti-Soviet rhetoric and acceptance of growing amounts of US aid, provided a suitable context within which the US-sponsored Sinai I (January, 1974) and Sinai II (September, 1975) disengagement agreements, the Camp David accords (September, 1978), and the Egyptian–Israeli Peace Treaty (March, 1979) could be negotiated. Sadat’s realignment from the Soviet Union to the West was capped by the expulsion of all remaining Soviet technicians, as well as Soviet diplomats from Egypt, in September, 1981.

As noted earlier, the interaction of foreign policies has an important impact on their outcomes, and, during this period, US diplomacy played an important role in the weakening of the Soviet Union’s position in the Middle East. From 1970 to 1973, Egypt’s realignment had been blocked by the United States’ refusal to respond to these overtures. When, in early 1971, Sadat informed Washington through the American Interests section of the Spanish embassy in Cairo that he was prepared to expel the Soviets from Egypt if disengagement and a reopening of the Suez Canal could be achieved, bureaucratic struggles within the US administration, and Nixon and Kissinger’s refusal to see Egypt as anything more than a Soviet client, inhibited an appropriate US response.<sup>6</sup> After 1973, however, the United States was more receptive, actively encouraging Egypt’s shift away from the USSR. While Sadat was attempting to secure US assistance, and direct US pressure on Israel, Henry Kissinger’s “step-by-step” diplomacy and, later, President Carter’s Camp David peace process, succeeded in driving wedges, not only between Egypt and the Soviet Union, but also between Egypt and most of the rest of the Arab world. As relations between Cairo and Moscow deteriorated, the United States was careful to step in to fill the resultant breaches in trade, economic, technical, and even military aid – thus bolstering the stability of Sadat’s regime while

further exacerbating the deterioration in USSR–Egyptian relations. An eminent student of Soviet–Arab relations, Ali Dessouki, made the following observations:

Economic aid agreements [with the USSR] declined from \$1 billion in 1955–1964 to \$440 million in 1965–1975, and then to zero in 1975–1979. Trade relations also declined after the cotton embargo and Egypt’s refusal to maintain the large trade surplus used to service its debt. The Soviet share of Egyptian exports fell from 50% in 1970–1975 to less than 15% in 1975. Egyptian imports from the Soviet Union also dropped from about 25% of Egypt’s total imports to around 10%. . . . By 1979 a few Soviet technicians and a limited volume of trade were the remnants of a once flourishing relationship.<sup>7</sup>

In contrast, US aid increased dramatically: “between 1946 and 1980 U.S. economic aid totaled \$7.2 billion, most of which (\$6.8 billion or 94%) was given in the late 1970s.”<sup>8</sup> American arms sales to Egypt (many of which were financed with US military credits) rose from \$68.4 million in 1976 to \$937.3 million three years later.<sup>9</sup>

The conservative states of the Arab world also played a role in limiting the effectiveness of Soviet policy during this period. Staunchly anti-socialist, anti-Soviet Saudi Arabia, its regional and international influence bolstered by the demise of Nasserism and the crisis of Arab nationalism (and by increased oil revenues and global recognition of the strategic and economic value of petroleum resources in the wake of the 1973–1974 Arab oil embargo), was particularly important in this regard. Although ostensibly opposed to the negotiation of a separate peace treaty with Israel, the Saudis supported Sadat’s shift from the USSR to the United States. They also poured considerable funds into North Yemen, subsidized Syria, and funded much of the Iraqi war effort against Iran in order to, among other things, offset Soviet influence. American efforts to encourage Egypt’s move away from the USSR, and to generally limit the Soviet Union’s presence in the Middle East, found further support from most Western countries as well as from China.

The final set of factors to limit the success of Soviet foreign policy in the region in general, and toward Egypt in particular, could be found within the Soviet foreign policy process itself. According to Mohamed Heikal – who, as editor of *al-Ahram*, was close to the center of Egyptian decision-making from 1952 to the mid-1970s (and who had intimate contact with numerous Soviet leaders) – the staid Soviet foreign policy apparatus often showed “astonishing insensitivity” to Third World representatives. Further, it proved “inept” at public relations, was often unable to “understand the realities of power in other parts of the world,” and was characterized, from its weighty and ponderous bureaucracy up to the top leadership in the Politburo, by rigidity and immobility.<sup>10</sup> Heikal added that middle-class

Third World leaders often found communication with their counterparts in the West much easier, political disagreements notwithstanding. In a similar vein, Lt General Saad al-Shazly, Egyptian Chief of Staff from 1971 to 1973, has described Soviet advisers to the Egyptian army as often “brusque, harsh, frequently arrogant, and usually unwilling to believe that anyone has anything to teach them.”<sup>11</sup> As will be discussed later, Soviet relations with Arab countries have tended to be conducted almost exclusively on an official, political level, with little social penetration – and are hence easily broken by executive fiat. Finally, Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev grew increasingly infirm as the 1970s progressed, a situation which led to the cancellation of several official meetings, and doubtless reduced still further the already severely limited dynamism of Soviet foreign policy.

Soviet–Egyptian political and economic relations improved somewhat after Sadat’s death in 1981, and under Egyptian President, Hosni Mubarak, a limited number of Soviet technicians were invited back to the country. In addition, in 1983 and again in 1984, significant Soviet–Egyptian trade and cooperation agreements were signed, while 1984 saw the resumption of normal diplomatic relations. Nevertheless, from 1979 Egypt has remained firmly in the Western camp, both during the Cold War, and later as a staunch US ally, following the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991.

### **After Egypt: the search for alternatives**

The growing estrangement between the USSR and Egypt in the 1970s led the Soviet Union to seek to strengthen its ties with other Arab countries. Libya, despite its past criticism of the Soviet Union and its strong anti-communism, was made receptive to Soviet overtures by increasing US hostility. Motivated by its animus for Sadat’s Egypt (and for the United States due to its support of Israel), by the fear of US intervention, and attracted by Soviet support of Arab and Palestinian rights and the technical aid and military equipment that the USSR was willing to supply, Qaddafi and Moscow forged close ties after the 1973 war. The first Libyan–Soviet trade agreement was signed in 1974, and trade between the two grew steadily thereafter. Two-way trade increased ninefold from 1977 to 1982, with Libya becoming the USSR’s largest Arab trading partner in the latter half of this period.<sup>12</sup> Military equipment, including SCUD surface-to-surface missiles and the latest Mig 25 aircraft and T-72 tanks, accounted for a considerable portion of Soviet sales to Libya. In the decade following the 1973 war, Libya received nearly 3,000 tanks, nearly 2,000 other armored fighting vehicles, and nearly 400 combat aircraft from the Soviet Union.<sup>13</sup>

The USSR also improved its relations with the Palestinian nationalist movement. Up until the late 1960s, the USSR tended to reject the

Palestinian resistance as reckless and ineffectual. Toward the end of 1969, however, the first official Soviet references to the Palestinian “people” or “nation” began to appear – a significant shift from the earlier references to “Palestinian Arabs” and “refugees”.<sup>14</sup> In February, 1970, the first Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) delegation visited Moscow.

However, it was not until after the 1973 Arab–Israeli war that Moscow began to substantially expand ties with the Palestinian movement. One important aspect of the Soviet Union’s attitude toward the Arab–Israeli conflict and the Palestine issue concerned the status of the Palestinian people themselves. From 1948 until the early 1970s, the Soviet Union tended to view this question as simply one of displaced “refugees”:

A settlement of the Palestine refugee problem should be the first step [toward an overall settlement]. Israel must recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian Arabs, and fulfill the U.N. resolution of December 1948, allowing them to return to their homes and paying compensation to those who do not wish to return. The Israeli leaders must start direct talks with representatives of the Palestinian Arabs to find a way of satisfying the refugees’ legitimate claims.<sup>15</sup>

During the mid- and late 1960s, however, a number of independent Palestinian fedayeen (guerrilla) groups had emerged which sought to bring about the liberation of all Palestine through a Palestinian armed struggle. The failure of the regular Arab armies in June, 1967, coupled with stiff fedayeen resistance to an Israeli raid against guerrilla positions near the Jordanian town of Karameh in 1968, catapulted such organizations into the forefront of the Palestinian issue. By 1968–1969, various fedayeen groups had effectively taken over the Palestine Liberation Organization and, in March, 1970, even the Arab communists had formed their own guerilla organization, al-Ansar. Thereafter, Palestinian nationalism in general, and the PLO in particular, became a force of considerable importance within the Arab–Israeli conflict.

The Soviet Union’s initial response to the rise of the fedayeen was a wary one. Both Moscow and local pro-Soviet communist parties criticized them for representing a “reckless trend to separate the Palestine issue from the Arab national liberation movement,” which, “as an alternative to broad political action and use of all forms and methods of struggle . . . offers only one method [e.g. armed struggle].”<sup>16</sup>

Nevertheless, substantive differences remained between the Soviet and Palestinian nationalist positions regarding the region. The PLO advocated the liberation of historic Palestine through armed struggle, and the establishment of a secular democratic state. For its part, the USSR continued to adhere to the principles set forth in Security Council Resolution 242. With regard to the Palestinian issue, its position was:

the Security Council resolution to the Palestine problem on the basis of the United Nations resolutions to the effect that those who want to return should be allowed to do so and that those who do not want to return should be compensated. This is the solution of the Palestine problem.<sup>17</sup>

Such Soviet–PLO differences were reflected in the hostile reception accorded to the PLO’s inner-communist group, al-Ansar, with that group being denied representation on the PLO’s Central Committee because of its adherence to the Soviet position regarding peaceful political settlement and the continued existence of Israel.<sup>18</sup> Soviet–PLO relations improved somewhat in 1972 and, in September of that year, the PLO received its first arms shipment from the USSR.<sup>19</sup> More fundamental changes were to occur, however.

In June, 1974, the Palestine National Council – the PLO’s highest legislative body – passed a series of resolutions which called for the establishment of a Palestinian “national authority” on any part of Palestine liberated. This opened the door to non-military methods of pursuing this goal.<sup>20</sup> In October, 1974, the Rabat summit conference of Arab leaders recognized the PLO as the “sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people” and supported the PLO’s position regarding a Palestinian “national authority.”<sup>21</sup>

Following such events, the Soviet Union began lending official support to the concept of Palestinian statehood on the West Bank and Gaza Strip.<sup>22</sup> In 1974, the USSR promised the PLO that it could open an office in Moscow, a pledge that was fulfilled two years later, and in 1981 the PLO office in Moscow was upgraded to embassy status. By 1978, the Soviet Union had recognized the PLO as the “sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.”<sup>23</sup> Throughout this period, the deterioration of Soviet–Egyptian relations, Egypt’s growing political estrangement from the Arab world, and Egypt’s eventual alignment with the United States, provided a major impetus to closer Soviet–PLO relations.

Declared Soviet support for Palestinian statehood (1974), and its acceptance of the PLO as the “sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people” (1978), represented significant policy developments. The Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrei Gromyko, summarized the Soviet policy toward the Palestinian question, and the Middle East as a whole, during his talks with the PLO delegation on November 13, 1979. As he suggested:

The USSR continues its principled policy regarding the Middle East as it did in the past. We are in favour of Israel’s withdrawal from the occupied territories, and in favour of granting the Palestinians their legitimate rights and the establishment of their independent state,



together with the right of all states in the region to be sovereign states. This is the essence of our position regarding Middle East problems.<sup>24</sup>

From 1979 until the Gorbachev leadership, the Soviet stand toward the question of Palestine remained largely unchanged.

In July, 1984, the Soviet Union called for an international conference for the purpose of negotiating a comprehensive settlement of the Palestine issue and Arab–Israeli dispute. At that time, the Soviet Union also set forth six principles which, in its opinion, should be subsumed within such a settlement:<sup>25</sup>

- The principle of the inadmissibility of territories captured by aggression (i.e., an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights, West Bank, Gaza Strip, and South Lebanon).
- The creation of an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza strip. Palestinian refugees should be allowed to return to their homes, or be granted compensation.
- Inclusion of East Jerusalem in the Palestinian state.
- The right of all states in the area “to secure an independent existence and development” should be ensured.
- The state of war between the Arab states and Israel should be ended. Each state should commit itself to honor the independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of others. Disputes should be settled through peaceful means.
- The international settlement for the region should be guaranteed, by UN Security Council permanent members or others. The USSR is prepared to participate in such guarantees.

Indeed, the USSR had expended considerable effort in order to shift the PLO’s position closer to its own. Following the 1973 war, the Soviets attempted to secure Palestinian participation in the Geneva peace conference, and PLO acceptance of Security Council resolution 242 in one form or another.<sup>26</sup> In subsequent bilateral meetings, Soviet officials had apparently continued to attempt to move the PLO toward acceptance of the latter, and toward some type of PLO recognition of Israel.<sup>27</sup>

It should be recognized, however, that the Soviet Union’s pre-Gorbachev position on the Palestine issue involved considerable shifting on its own part. It has already been noted that Soviet support, since 1974, for an independent Palestinian state represented a major policy change, as did Soviet recognition of the PLO four years later. The USSR was, in its attempts to secure PLO participation in the Geneva conference and PLO acceptance of Security Council Resolution 242, prepared to make significant concessions, despite the obvious importance of both of these to Soviet policy and interests. During the Lebanese civil war, the USSR was generally supportive of the PLO, and quietly critical of Syrian intervention, despite

its close links to the latter and the great importance of Syria to Soviet policy in the region.<sup>28</sup> The USSR had also been quietly supportive of the official PLO leadership, and critical of Syrian policy during the Syrian-encouraged mutiny within the ranks of the largest Palestinian group, al-Fatah, in 1983–1984.<sup>29</sup> Such factors suggest that, since the mid-1970s, the Palestinian issue in general, and the PLO in particular, had gained a position of some significance within Soviet policy in the region. This had, in turn, been reflected in the positions of Arab communist parties in Egypt, Syria and Lebanon, Iraq, and the Sudan, even though one can safely assume that the evolution of Soviet policy was, at that time, also influenced by the opinions and attitudes of the Arab communist parties, which by now were much more independent and working together at the regional level.

### **Soviet regional diplomacy**

At the same time that new allies were being found to offset the deterioration of relations with Egypt, the Soviet Union was seeking to consolidate relations with those Arab countries with whom ties had remained friendly. One of these was the People's Democratic Republic of (South) Yemen (PDRY), which continued to pursue pro-Soviet policies, particularly after the execution of President Salem Rubai 'Ali, in the summer of 1978, put an end to South Yemen's cautious attempts to improve diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia. In the summer of 1979, South Yemen became the first Arab state to gain observer status within the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance, and in October of that year it signed a 20-year treaty of friendship and cooperation. In January, 1980, the PDRY voted against a UN resolution condemning the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and, in August, 1981, an alliance between Soviet-supported South Yemen, Ethiopia, and Libya was concluded in Aden. Seen by many at the time as a major consolidation of Soviet influence in the Red Sea/Indian Ocean area, the "Aden Pact" in fact proved to have little real substance.<sup>30</sup>

From the late 1960s, the Soviet Union extended considerable economic and technical aid to the PDRY, particularly in the areas of irrigation, mineral exploration, and fish processing and transportation facilities. The USSR also supplied the South Yemeni armed forces, and sent an estimated 1,500 Soviet military advisers into the country. For its part, the Soviet Union gained access to docking facilities at Socotra, and to docking and airfield facilities at Aden.

In Iraq, the close relations formalized by the 1972 treaty of friendship and cooperation continued, and, in 1976–1977, Iraq concluded further trade agreements with the USSR, Czechoslovakia, and the German Democratic Republic. The USSR and its eastern European allies supplied and trained the Iraqi armed forces, and provided significant technical assistance to Iraq's oil industry. Soviet arms shipments to Iraq between 1975 and 1979 were worth some \$4.9 billion dollars.<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, as the decade progressed, a number of issues, reaching their peak in 1979 with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, contributed to rising tensions between Iraq and the Soviet Union. George Lenczowski has enumerated these issues as sevenfold: (1) Soviet–Iraqi differences over the Palestine question and the Arab–Israel dispute, (2) Iraqi opposition to Soviet support of Ethiopia against Somalia and Eritrea, (3) Ba‘athist suppression and execution of Iraqi communists, (4) Iraq’s refusal to condemn Eurocommunism, China and other ideological opponents of the CPSU, (5) a similar refusal to grant the Soviet Union automatic support for Soviet actions elsewhere in the world, (6) Iraqi communist support for the Kurdish nationalist movement, and (7) Iraq’s growing wealth, which gave it a greater measure of independence.<sup>32</sup> It might be added that Iraq “shook the rope tying it to the Soviets”<sup>33</sup> to dispel Western and Gulf perceptions of Iraq as a Soviet proxy, while simultaneously putting Moscow on notice that Baghdad would act to protect its domestic and regional interests, and should not be taken for granted. At the same time, Iraqi officials were careful to stress that there would be no severance of relations, or abrogation of the 1972 treaty, since the Iraqi government viewed its alliance with the USSR as a “strategic” one. Relations improved in late 1978 and early 1979, only to deteriorate again after the Iranian revolution and particularly with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, not only condemned the Soviet Union’s actions but Iraq voted against Moscow on the issue in the UN General Assembly in January, 1980.

The Iranian revolution, and especially the outbreak of the Iran–Iraq war in September 1980, posed a serious foreign policy dilemma for Soviet decision-makers. Should the USSR fulfill the letter and the spirit of its 1972 treaty and support Iraq or should it transfer its backing to the Islamic revolution in Iran, which seemed to have successfully challenged US interests in the region? In practice, the Soviet Union oscillated between the two positions while calling for a resolution to the conflict which ultimately was to last for ten years. For the first year of the war, the Soviet Union – although not severing ties with Iraq – tilted toward Iran, offering to supply the Islamic Republic with technical assistance and military equipment. Its overtures rebuffed,<sup>34</sup> the Soviet Union assumed a more neutral position after mid-1982. By early 1984, the USSR had clearly shifted its support to Iraq, supplying massive quantities of war *matériel* and several hundred advisers, extending a \$2 billion loan on very generous terms, and undertaking a number of development and petroleum projects, including the construction of a dam across the Tigris in northern Iraq.<sup>35</sup> A year later, however, there were indications that Iraq’s continued ties to conservative Arab regimes, its resumption of diplomatic relations with the United States in November, 1984, and renewed Iranian flexibility vis-à-vis the Soviet Union were causing the latter to move somewhat closer to a neutral position once again. The immense Gulf and US financial and military support

for Iraq, and US secret arms deals with the Iranian regime during the “Iran-Contra” period had left the Soviets ineffectual in dealing with the war.

With the rupture of Soviet–Egyptian relations, however, it was Syria that became the Soviet Union’s most important ally in the Middle East – a status formalized in October, 1980 with the signing of a 25-year treaty of friendship and cooperation between the two countries. The Soviet Union supplied Damascus with large quantities of arms, during and immediately after the 1973 war, and a further \$3.6 billion in arms between 1975 and 1979. In 1982, it provided an immediate \$500 million in military equipment to make good Syrian losses in Lebanon, and made several other gestures of support. These included the supply of conventionally armed SS-21 surface-to-surface missiles and the deployment of Soviet-manned SA-5 surface-to-air missiles. By 1984, approximately 7,000 Soviet military advisers were serving in Syria.<sup>36</sup> Outside the military realm, Soviet economic and technical assistance tripled between 1971 and 1980, and Syrian–Soviet trade increased sevenfold between 1977 and 1982, making it 13 percent of all Soviet–Arab trade in that year.<sup>37</sup>

However, the scale of Soviet support for Syria did not bring a corresponding Soviet influence over Syrian policies. In 1976, for example, the Soviet Union was singularly unsuccessful in forestalling Syrian intervention against the National Movement and PLO in Lebanon, despite open criticism by Moscow of Syrian actions, and a reported punitive slowdown of Soviet arms shipments.<sup>38</sup> The USSR was also unable to bring about an improvement in relations between Syria and Iraq, or between Syrian President Hafez al-Assad and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat. Indeed, Syria’s status as the Soviet Union’s last major ally in the Middle East, and the lesson of Egypt, appear to have given Damascus considerable leverage over Moscow, rather than vice versa.

Although Syria, Iraq, South Yemen, Libya, and the PLO, and, on the periphery, Afghanistan and Ethiopia, represented the foundation and focus of Soviet policy in the Middle East after the early-1970s withdrawal from Egypt, the USSR also pursued cordial relations with other countries in the area. In Algeria, the Soviet Union supplied and trained the Algerian armed forces. The Soviets also maintained friendly relations with North Yemen, supplying them with considerable amounts of military equipment, but any presence Moscow was able to achieve in North Yemen was more than counterbalanced by the force of Saudi money and influence. In addition, despite Morocco’s pro-Western orientation, the Soviet Union managed to forge a relatively extensive economic relationship with the kingdom. Soviet–Kuwaiti ties were also to become significant, as Kuwait was for much of this period the only member of the Gulf Cooperation Council to have diplomatic relations with the USSR. Moreover, in pursuance of its policy of neutralism in the Iraq–Iran war, Kuwait purchased weapons from the Soviet Union as well as from the West. By the winter of 1985, perceptions of Soviet moderation had led both Oman and the United Arab

Emirates to follow Kuwait's lead and establish formal relations of their own with Moscow.

Like many of the Arab regimes, especially its closest friends and allies, the USSR shared a common opposition to the US-sponsored Camp David peace process and the expansion of Western, especially American, influence in the region. Other issues, however, divided the USSR's friends in the Arab world, and hence undermined Soviet policy, and differences between Soviet and Arab interests and actions had a similar effect. The intense rivalry between the Ba'athist regimes in Damascus and Baghdad was one such obstacle. However, divergence between the position on the Arab–Israeli conflict held by Moscow and that held by Arab countries, particularly staunchly rejectionist Iraq and Libya, was a further source of difficulty, as was the Lebanese civil war, which in 1976 pitted Syria against the Iraqi-supported PLO. As noted above, the Iranian revolution, and the subsequent Iran–Iraq war, both raised for the Soviet Union the dilemma of whether it should maintain its alliance with Iraq, backed by the conservative pro-Western Gulf states, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, or transfer its support to the Islamic Republic of Iran, backed by Syria and Libya. Finally, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon found the USSR supporting Syria and the PLO against Israel, while the subsequent split in the ranks of the PLO found the Soviet Union weakly supporting Yasser Arafat against Syria and his Palestinian opponents.

Soviet policy in the Middle East during this period can hardly be described as assertive, expansionist, or even very successful, despite the tendency of some contemporaneous observers to represent it as such. Rather, the Soviet approach toward a reactive, conservative policy that responded to events as they arose in the Middle East largely rendered the USSR a prisoner of continually changing developments in regional politics. In the 1950s and 1960s, the USSR benefited from rising levels of Arab anti-imperialism, and from the recognition by Nasser and other non-aligned nationalist leaders, that the Soviet Union provided a useful counter to Western hegemony. The Arab–Israeli conflict and its associated challenges made the Soviet Union an even more appropriate ally in Arab eyes by creating Arab demands for the economic and military wherewithal to confront Israel while simultaneously discrediting the United States. Even so, the USSR's involvement in the issue, and in the region as a whole, was often characterized by a seeming reluctance, as the history of the 1955 Egyptian–Czech arms deal clearly showed.

Given such an approach on the part of the Soviet Union, it is not surprising to find that much of the Soviet presence in the Middle East was dependent on the perceptions, interests, and hence political goodwill of Middle Eastern states, and it follows that, when these regional factors changed, the Soviet position was rendered vulnerable. This of course is precisely what happened after 1973, particularly in Egypt, but also elsewhere in the region. Sadat's realignment of Egyptian foreign policy

removed the foundations from beneath Soviet Middle East policy, while the declining salience of the Palestine question, and the profusion of other regional disputes weakened what had been the political focal point of the Soviet position. Finally, Europe's post-1973 shift to a diplomatic position more sympathetic to Palestinian rights removed a major barrier to Euro–Arab interaction, and hence brought, at least from the Soviet perspective, a new rival for Arab attentions.

The late 1980s' shift of Soviet policy toward the accommodation of US and Israeli demands, and the loosening of Soviet links with the Arab and Palestinian struggle<sup>39</sup> also did not pass without effects on the positions of the Arab communists. Up to the very end, Arab communists supported all Gorbachev's peace initiatives, and generally kept silent about the sensitive issues of the Soviet Jewish immigration, the new eastern European, and later even the Soviet, friendship and cooperation with Israel. However, the Soviet's formal support of Palestinian rights and struggle remained unchanged. With the demise of Soviet communism, the Arab communists and their former eastern European comrades now faced apparently different political realities, and would be forced to respond to different popular and social needs and demands.

## 5 Perestroika and after

The Gorbachev era, the final chapter of Soviet and eastern European communism, could not have failed to make an enormous impact on the lives and fortunes of Arab communism. Gorbachev's coming to power in March, 1985 and his "new thinking" brought about dramatic changes in Soviet foreign policy. Third World nations, including the entire Arab world, were only of peripheral interest and importance to Gorbachev and his reformist ideas. His Middle Eastern policy was subservient to the overall objective of opening Soviet society to the world, especially the Western world and the United States. In trying to bring an end to the hostilities and mutual mistrust of the Cold War era, and allow more room for Soviet economic reforms, Gorbachev and his advisers endeavored to improve Soviet-Israeli relations, necessitating thereby a lessening of the long-standing Soviet support for the Arab nationalist cause.<sup>1</sup> However, the Soviet retreat from its support of Arab nationalists and the Palestinian cause was incremental and intricate. The Palestinian and the Arab peoples still had many influential friends in the Soviet policy apparatus, and both Gorbachev and his Foreign Minister, Edward Shevardnadze, needed to work in a cautious and prudent way.<sup>2</sup> The first more open and decisive steps in the new direction took place during Yasser Arafat's visit to Moscow in April, 1988. During Arafat's visit and in the months leading up to the November, 1988 PNC session in Algeria, Arafat and other Palestinian leaders, such as George Habash and Nayef Hawatmah, increasingly came under pressure to accept UN Security Council Resolution 242, including its provisions of Palestinian recognition of the state of Israel, and respect for Israeli security concerns.<sup>3</sup> These were long-standing issues that Palestinian leaders had held as negotiating positions which were now, in the words of one Israeli scholar, "subjected to a heavy dose of Soviet pressure to generate a new peace process."<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the Soviets were reluctant to recognize the creation of a Palestinian state at the November, 1988 PNC session, and won the praise of the US State Department and the Israeli government for their efforts "to prevent this new entity from joining the UN or the World Health Organization in 1989."<sup>5</sup>

Moscow then started to follow American foreign policy on the region almost without question, so much so that it advised the PLO to participate

directly in talks with Israel,<sup>6</sup> and even questioned the PLO's position as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.<sup>7</sup> One long-lasting bone of contention, between the Soviets and Israel, as well as between the Soviets and Palestinian leaders and Arab governments, was that of Jewish immigration to Israel from the USSR. From the beginning of 1990 to the spring of 1992, some 400,000 Russian Jews arrived in Israel.<sup>8</sup> Such a massive influx of Russian Jewish émigrés greatly altered the demographic and political environment of Israel, and posed a real threat to Palestinian aspirations for statehood. Also, it undermined the economic well-being of the Palestinian population living in the occupied territories who had previously served as a source of labor for Israeli businesses. The Soviet government of Mikhail Gorbachev was either unable or unwilling to prevent the ever-increasing flow. Nor did it press Israeli authorities to refrain from settling the émigrés within the occupied territories as "settlers", a situation which was having a direct impact on Palestinian rights and self-determination and was a violation of international law.<sup>9</sup> In response to the flow, a Palestinian delegation visited Moscow in the spring of 1990 in order to discuss the issue and asked the Soviets for a "neutral international supervisory committee to implement the UN resolutions calling for a cessation to Israeli settlement activity in the occupied territories, and to suspend the intrusive Jewish emigration from the Soviet Union to the occupied territories."<sup>10</sup> The Palestinians also wanted the Soviets to link the problematic issue of Jewish emigration with Palestinian human rights and self-determination in the occupied territories, "including the expropriation of houses, land, and water resources."<sup>11</sup> Even Palestinian citizens of Israel expressed misgivings as expressed by Raja Tghbareth, Secretary-General of Abna' al-Balad, when he stated:

adding one million Jews to Israel [the then expected total of the immigration wave] forms an actual danger to the very fact of our existence. Transfer of the remaining Palestinian population comes closer to realization than it had been before.<sup>12</sup>

The fact that Soviet policy under Gorbachev did not take these fears into account roused growing disillusionment and bitterness among the Palestinian population. In September, 1990, PLO executive member Abdullah Hourani expressed Palestinian concerns that Moscow was attempting to please the Zionist movement and thereby obtain American financial support and, if that were the case, "it [was] no longer possible to regard [Russia] as a friend of world forces of liberation including the Arab world and the Palestinian people and cause."<sup>13</sup> Palestinian support for Iraq during the Gulf War, and the sympathies of the Palestinian people for the plight of the Iraqi people after the Gulf War, as well as admiration for the plotters of the August, 1991 Russian coup expressed by some



Palestinian leaders such as PLO Foreign Minister Farouq Qaddoumi, undermined Palestinian–Russian relations further.<sup>14</sup> While the Palestinian cause still enjoyed popular and media support in much of Russia, the reality became evident that Russian relations with Israel, for reasons of economic support and the large Russian émigré population now residing in Israel, were now of greater importance.<sup>15</sup> When, on December 8, 1991 Soviet rule in Russia finally ended, Palestinian disregard for Soviet policies were evident, as expressed in the editorial of East Jerusalem’s Arab Daily *Al Nahar* during Gorbachev’s visit to Israel in June, 1992, when it stated:

The reason for the Palestinian people’s disappointment with their old “friend” is that they were hoping that Gorbachev would alleviate their suffering and ease the hard conditions under which they are living. . . . There is no doubt that Gorbachev played an important role in all of the crises that have hit the Middle East over the past eight years. Soviet immigrants are being settled on Palestinian lands, after which [Palestinians] are expelled to Jordan, from where they will be dispersed throughout the Arab world. All this is thanks to Gorbachev’s policies. That is what [he] has done to the Palestinian people.<sup>16</sup>

Gorbachev himself, while touring Israel, spoke harshly of the Palestinian leadership, without any mention of the plight of the Palestinian people, recommending that the Palestinians simply choose a path to peace and social harmony with Israel.<sup>17</sup> Palestinian objections notwithstanding, the Gorbachev policy formulation has been adopted by successive Russian governments, including that of President Boris Yeltsin and his Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev, who did not want to endanger “their close relationship with the United States by adopting anything but the positions advocated by Washington.”<sup>18</sup>

At least at the beginning, Arab communists apparently did not realize the real meaning and direction of the Soviet reversal of policy. Among their responses to Gorbachev’s peace initiatives, two major themes became evident: (1) The Arab communists showed general support for the peace initiatives; their rationale being that they fully accepted Gorbachev’s arguments; and (2) The Arab communists who also tended to stress the consistency between Soviet initiatives and the Arab communists’ stand, emphasized that the solution to the Middle East problems would be a resolution of the Arab–Israeli conflict.

A final statement on October 16, 1986, of the Communist Parties of the Arab East, urged “All democratic and progressive forces in Arab states . . . to intensify their participation in the world peace movement and the drive to end the military presence of the U.S. and other imperialist powers in the Middle East.”<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, a joint communiqué by the Jordanian and the Palestinian Communist Parties in January, 1987 declared:

The JCP and the PCP support consistent Soviet moves and peace initiatives to stave off the menace of an all-destructive war, attain nuclear disarmament, rid humanity of nuclear weapons by the end of the 20th century, block moves to militarize space, and improve the international climate. Taken as a whole, these initiatives are a common programme of all peace forces on the planet.<sup>20</sup>

A joint statement by the communist parties of Jordan, Palestine and Israel in November, 1987 also praised the Soviet peace initiatives, which aimed to eradicate nuclear arms by the turn of the century and help humankind survive by removing the threat of a nuclear conflagration.<sup>21</sup> In its statement of November 1987, the reconstituted Egyptian Communist Party declared:

The program of perestroika and glasnost initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev is a foremost event not only in the life of the CPSU and the Soviet peoples. It concerns all communists and champions of liberation and social progress. Any success or failure by the state which is the cradle of socialism affects, for better or worse, the worldwide drive against imperialism, reactionaries and death merchants.

The ECP Central Secretariat is following with immense attention the successful peace campaign conducted by Mikhail Gorbachev, setting up an example of Marxist humanitarianism. Marxist humanitarianism is precisely the focus of this campaign in which the Soviet Union is making concessions, thus showing its might, to resist the menace of nuclear war and protect our civilization from the threat of nuclear annihilation.<sup>22</sup>

The Third Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties of the region of the eastern Mediterranean, Near and Middle East and the Red Sea declared:

The participants reaffirm the firm position of their parties that the only option for the survival of humankind lies in averting a nuclear war by putting an end to the arms race and especially the averting of its expansion to outer space, the final freeing of our planet of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, and the peaceful coexistence of states with different socio-economic systems.<sup>23</sup>

Among the Arab communist parties, the Lebanese Communist Party (LCP) seemed to be the most enthusiastic to support and provide a more theoretical and comprehensive interpretation of the Soviet peace policies and Gorbachev's "new political thinking." As early as November, 1986, the LCP declared:

Ensuring peace, in particular ending the production and development of nuclear weapons, is the central task for all the peoples in our day.

For us who live in Lebanon and the Arab world as a whole, it is closely bound up with the struggle for national liberation, and against any aggressive acts or threats to which our countries are subjected by Israel, the imperialist circles of the United States and international Zionism. . . .

The Lebanese, Palestinian and the Arab people as a whole, and their patriotic and democratic forces, the communists in the first place, regard peace as the cardinal national problem. . . . Despite the complicated conditions in Lebanon, . . . the party will continue to carry on with all its strength the struggle to make the problem of peace a matter for every Lebanese person. The party calls on all the patriots to exert utmost efforts for staging diverse demonstrations and other actions as a contribution to uniting tens of millions of people in the worldwide movement for peace and disarmament, and promoting an agreement on the issue to rid humankind of nuclear weapons and the devastating effects of their use.<sup>24</sup>

The impact on Third World countries, including eight from the Middle East/North Africa (MENA) region, were immense. Rafic Samhoun, a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Lebanese Communist Party, wrote in October, 1987:

The struggle to preserve peace is by no means a problem imposed externally on the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America, and they do not regard it as an alien issue of minor importance. It also affects the vital interests of the Arab peoples and is linked directly with the very essence of their struggle.<sup>25</sup>

In January, 1988, the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the LCP, George Hawi, with the chairman of the Progressive Socialist Party of Lebanon, Walid Jumblat, announced:

[t]heir solidarity with the Soviet foreign policy move, which has prompted a lively response from the Arab public. Arab nations are waking up to the fact that a healthier climate in international relations is making things easier to resolve regional conflicts, including an entrenched and complicated one as in the Middle East . . . both parties highly praised consistent Soviet efforts at a peaceful settlement of such conflicts.<sup>26</sup>

The communiqué of the plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the LCP held in January, 1988, "reaffirmed the need to intensify the struggle for world peace and disarmament, and stressed the importance of support for the Soviet initiatives in this area."<sup>27</sup> In a statement by its Central Committee Political Bureau, the LCP affirmed:

The dialogue (between the Soviet Union and the USA) on general nuclear disarmament, and on conventional arms cuts is being continued. That alone shows the triumph of the CPSU's course of perestroika, and the new political thinking and is a step forward in laying a sound foundation for the policy of detente in international relations.<sup>28</sup>

The LCP, also stimulated by Gorbachev's new thinking, tried to give some new thought to the Arab communist and Arab national liberation movement. The aforementioned communiqué of the Central Committee of the Jordanian Communist Party (JCP) declared:

The LCP CC [Lebanese Communist Party Central Committee] emphasized the importance of what Gorbachev has said about the need to renew the international communist movement, and underline its exceptional significance for the Arab communist movement. A solution of this problem will enable the Arab communists to play fully their vanguard role in the revolutionary transformations in the Arab world.

The LCP called for a joint effort of all the Arab communist parties and progressive forces to "develop advanced scientific Arab thought, a new theory of the Arab revolutionary movement, and its programs, means, methods and organizational instruments of struggle."<sup>29</sup>

In an article published in August, 1989, the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the LCP, Georgi Hawi, wrote:

We, in the Lebanese Communist Party, believe that new political thinking goes beyond the sphere of interstate relations. It has a global character, and signifies a view of human problems, and of the revolutionary movement that differs from that of the past. According to communists, this view is not outside Marxist ideology. Moreover, it represents a true understanding of it in the context of the modern realities.

According to Hawi, the realities in the past were that the major breakthroughs toward socialism had, in one way or another, been connected with wars. "Today," he continued, "we have the very opposite situation. The existence and the ultimate victory of socialism are organically connected with the preservation of peace."

Hawi went on to criticize the illusion that the increased external aid to revolutionary forces, up to and including direct-armed intervention, would promote a "swift and easy success for the revolution in any country." Moreover he admitted that, "the potential of the USSR and its allies turns out to be limited. Illusions concerning this potential were based on what we later learned to be, often unrealistic statistical data about the successes of socialism." According to Hawi:

While there are important positive changes in the political sphere achieved by the socialist countries, the very opposite is happening in the economy. The West continues to be economically more successful.

This is why, I think, the socialist countries were unable to give those young states which decided to break with capitalism enough economic and social assistance to rid them of their dependence. What is more, their dependence has been growing, and even the socialist states themselves are in a sense hostages to the world market in terms of credits, technology, and the price of raw materials and finished products. . . . With the intricate tangle of various factors, it is impossible to regard the revolution as an isolated phenomenon or to oversimplify the combination of internal and external conditions, their maturity and effectiveness. Oversimplification leads to adventurism and tends to produce pseudo-revolutionary programmes in which voluntarism substitutes for scrupulous consideration of reality.<sup>30</sup>

Hawi also pointed out:

We are also convinced that new political thinking is working a radical change in international relations. This does not mean simply a handful of peace initiatives, but a new conception of the struggle for peace. We are all engaged in the struggle for peace, and not just to show that the communists are the most fervent champions of peace while the capitalists want war, and that one day the court of history will hand down its verdict in our favour. Such an approach offers nothing in the face of the menace of the thermonuclear disaster. The task ahead lies not in arguments over principles, but in gaining a convincing victory for peace before the end of this century.<sup>31</sup>

### **Issues of the 1990s for the Arab communist movement**

The three most important themes that have dominated communist thought in the Arab world in the period between 1989 and 1994 and have gone on to have a direct impact on the communist movement in the Arab world have been: (1) perestroika, (2) the collapse of the communist bloc, and (3) Islamic political activism.

#### ***Perestroika***

Although somewhat mixed, the dominant reaction to perestroika among Arab communists was enthusiasm. For example, Ahmed Baalabakki, a Lebanese communist, maintained: "Perestroika raises hope of liberating peripheral Arab communist parties from alienation, and facilitates the utilization of Marxist and liberal innovative experiences in dealing with theoretical and political matters."

Another theorist, Masaud Dhahir, a Lebanese Marxist, stated that, "There is a severe need for perestroika in the Arab world, both on the theoretical and practical levels if Marxism is to develop intellectually and practically."<sup>32</sup> Many Arab communist parties sought to reinvigorate their programs after perestroika,<sup>33</sup> given their extreme dependency on the Soviet Union for theoretical inspiration.<sup>34</sup> Perestroika was even considered as a solution for the "socialist crisis" and as a way of improving and enriching scientific socialist theory using the approaches of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, specifically those parts of their thought which called for the improvement of existing theories and the exploration of new ones.<sup>35</sup> Rafiq Samhoun further argued that perestroika would result in a change of Soviet perceptions, relations, and attitudes toward national liberation movements.<sup>36</sup>

There were, however, objections to perestroika based on the idea that Marxism itself does not need to be re-examined, though its interpretation may. Most Arab communist parties, because of their circumstances, and the composition of their leadership, blindly awaited instructions from Moscow. Also, it was argued that the petty Stalinist tendencies of many leadership elements had prohibited discussion and debate and led to the malformation of Marxist principles and internal division,<sup>37</sup> and that this could also occur if examination and debate was forced by a perceived need to "catch up" with perestroika. Moreover, some Arab communist leaders opposed perestroika because of its Soviet-centric orientation, and believed it to be an expression of Gorbachev's pragmatism, opportunism, and individualism, rather than a necessary rethinking of Soviet principles. Indeed, ideological and organizational reforms initiated by Gorbachev received an unequal level of support, even among the rank and file members of the Arab communists. However, perestroika, understood as a general overhaul of the existing political and economic structures, and glasnost, the postulate of openness and democratization, were generally well received by Arab Marxists, and, in spite of some objections, were even enthusiastically approved.<sup>38</sup> The third element of the Soviet reforms, however, the "New Thinking," which contained a radically new approach to global and regional international relations, was often viewed by Arab communists with mistrust and skepticism.<sup>39</sup> An end to the long-shared struggle with imperialism, working toward a final socialist victory on a global scale, was a long-shared goal that was being undermined by the close cooperation the Soviet Union was pursuing with the United States, and the policy caused suspicion as Arab communists were excluded from the process, and feared that any United States-USSR rapprochement could well come at their expense.<sup>40</sup> Some of Gorbachev's actions, especially his allowing the free emigration of Soviet Jews to Israel, increased these fears and anxieties.<sup>41</sup>

The Secretary General of the Sudanese Communist Party suggested that the idea in the 1950s and 1960s of the USSR and the socialist bloc internationally as an endless wellspring of support for Arab liberation

should be abandoned. This, he asserted, would actually hasten the process of revolution by forcing revolutionary elements in the Arab world to come to terms with the true situation on the ground. The inability of communist states to continue to support revolutionary regimes and Third World development would force Arab communists to a more realistic evaluation of the real economic conditions of their societies and reduce their vehement opposition to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, while not abandoning communism.<sup>42</sup>

### *The collapse of the communist bloc*

Reactions to the collapse of the socialist bloc were similarly mixed, with some regarding it as a victory for true Marxism, and others who seeing it as a possibly insurmountable crisis for the communist movement. The former group regarded most of the “communist” regimes as Stalinist – positions which the international bourgeoisie identified with socialism in order to discredit communism. Nahidh Hitr, a Jordanian Marxist, argued that the collapse of the Stalinist regimes showed that the temporary victory of capitalist forces were merely a historical stage, attributable to the Stalinist/Soviet’s deceptive manipulation of the consciousness of the proletariat and the will of the masses in general.<sup>43</sup>

The second view, championed by El-Said,<sup>44</sup> an Egyptian Marxist historian, challenged the foundations of socialism in practice in the twentieth century. The first assumption was that “capitalism digs its own grave.” El Said went on to note that capitalism has proven remarkably adept at finding the tools to prolong its life and defuse or escape class struggle, at least temporarily. The second flawed assumption, according to El-Said, was that “imperialism is the highest stage of capitalism,” and he pointed out that capitalism has extended itself beyond the imperialist stage, and that the conflicts that were supposed to arise between capitalist states have not. Finally, the most dangerous socialist assumption, outlined by El-Said, was the belief that in socialist societies there is no class struggle. This belief gave distorted Stalinist or other misguided regimes the ideological excuse to suppress the masses or any struggle as counter-revolutionary. El-Said saw the solution in a return to the fundamentals of Marxist thought, and a new consideration of what is a general law and what is a mere assumption.<sup>45</sup>

Similarly, ‘Amir Abdalla, an Iraqi communist, explained that the collapse of the Soviet bloc was due to mistakes and structural problems in both the theoretical and applied aspects of the construction of the socialist system,<sup>46</sup> even though Arab Marxism had a sound foundation in the general enlightenment movement in the Arab world, beginning with the activities of the CPS in the 1930s. These early communists adopted a logical and coherent Bolshevik program on a local base, comprehending the link between local

feudalism and colonialism and, ultimately, capitalism, and emphasizing the exclusive role of workers and peasants in solving national problems. According to 'Amir 'Abdalla, Arab communists under the influence of Moscow, however, adopted a Stalinist agenda and retreated from the commitment to the goal of Arab unity articulated at the February, 1936 conference of Arab communist parties. This distorted the evolution of the movement, and led to a break with intellectuals among Arab communists. The Arab Stalinist parties struggled for the general good, but were ideologically stalled and oriented toward direct conflict with authorities, which isolated them from the rest of the nationalist movement. Lacking ideological guidance, they linked themselves to the USSR and became needlessly involved in the struggle between the Soviets and the US when they should have worked to distance the Arab world from this conflict.<sup>47</sup>

Since the collapse of the Soviet bloc, however, Arab communists have focused on two trends. The first is a struggle for a global adoption of Marxism based on contemporary realities. The second is more introspective, calling for a return to Marxist fundamentals on the basis that the dominant Marxist approach in the modern context is a distortion of Marx's original ideas. Some have even questioned the validity of the rise of the Arab communist movement and its value to Arab societies. This self-doubt has led to another question as to what the proposed mission of these parties in their formative stage really was and whether it was socialism or national liberation? They further asked if it was in the interests of the working class, or toward a broader idea of social development? The context of the time, when the Arab communist parties began, called for liberation from colonial domination, independence, national unity, and socio-economic development. The question that arose, therefore, was whether the communist party was needed or appropriate for this stage. Close involvement with the Comintern and the Soviets had drawn the Arab communist parties away from their societies and the masses, which resulted in vague, generalized policies not based on local conditions, and in narrow indecisive positions regarding all other groups and individuals. Atiya Massuh, a Syrian communist, noted that extremism in class struggle issues also led to Arab communists missing the opportunity to form unified public movements.<sup>48</sup>

Khalid al-Kid, a Sudanese communist, even questioned the need for a working-class party,<sup>49</sup> arguing that the working class no longer constitutes a majority in either the developed or the underdeveloped world, and that technological change has altered the class structure in the developed world in a way traditional communist thought cannot account for. In the underdeveloped world, using Sudan as an example, he blames parasitic activity for pushing the working and many professional classes to even lower strata, which communist parties should strive to represent.<sup>50</sup>

After the disappearance of the Soviet Union, the greatly weakened Arab communists now wanted to stress, more than ever before, their localized



roots and national character, though their basic vision of inter-Arab relations, however, seemed to remain essentially unchanged. In June, 1991, following the Gulf War, the communist parties of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Oman, in a public statement, welcomed the liberation of Kuwait “by virtue of the world’s consensus embodied in international law,” but deplored “[the] fearful destruction of Iraq [and] the U.S. dictates.”<sup>51</sup> According to these communist parties, the lesson to be learned from the tragic events was “the importance of struggle to speed Gulf unity based on the will of the people and democratic foundations,” and further efforts for closer relations with all “sister Arab countries” on the necessary basis of democracy and respect for personal freedoms and human rights.<sup>52</sup> The parties called for “struggling to utilize Arab material, financial, and human resources to further our [Arab] development and common destiny on the path to unity” and demanded “united efforts to solve complex major problems justly and permanently, especially the issue of the Palestinian Arab people.”<sup>53</sup>

### ***Islamic political activism***

At a January, 1994 conference of Arab communist and labor parties, the issue of Islamic fundamentalism and Islamic political activism was addressed and the resulting agreements emphasized:

- The need to neutralize political Islam while supporting the right of Muslims to establish modern democratic secular states based on an Islamic heritage.
- The need to address the intellectual and ideological elements of Islamic extremism.
- The need to distinguish between popular Islam and political Islam, which manifests itself in violence and extremism.
- The need to question whether Islamic extremism holds any inherent possibility for development toward the interests of the popular movement.<sup>54</sup>

Obviously, these calls for discussion took place after the collapse of the Soviet bloc and the appearance of powerful Islamic political movements. In 1989, Karim Morue, the Deputy Secretary General of the LCP, argued that ignoring the pivotal role of Islam in history, heritage, popular culture, and models of development was a mistake, and must be addressed in the future. These arguments were published in *al-Ahram* (Cairo) on June 14, 1989, and in *al-Safir* (Beirut) on July 4, 1989. The articles initiated intense debate and all were subsequently collected and published in a book entitled *Hiwarat*.<sup>55</sup> Many Arab communists argued in support not only of “Islamic heritage,” but also of reviving elements of it. As Islamic trends often take

an anti-state stance, or criticize the IMF and global capitalism, many Arab communists suggested that these commonalities could form the basis for discussions around creating a more enlightened religious trend.<sup>56</sup>

Karim Morue's propositions for initiating discussions with Islamist movements met with some resistance, as some viewed this direction as an obvious abandonment of Marxist principles. An Iraqi communist, Falih Abd al-Jabar, for example, argued that without neglecting its anti-imperialist tone, the motto of "Islamic Brotherhood" is often used as a tool by the Saudi and Iranian regimes to increase their influence, and is thereby contradictory to Arab unity. He further noted that Islamist forces also seek to limit political authority to religious leaders and that some Islamist thinkers support private, or even semi-feudal ownership. Moreover, Islamist economic thought focuses on the sphere of distribution, thus reducing objective economic relations to moral relations,<sup>57</sup> while ignoring the importance of the sphere of production.

Arab communist movements initially supported perestroika as a chance for renewal and independence. However, they were left in crisis by the withdrawal of the USSR and the recruitment by Islamist movements of social strata that formerly supported the communists. This crisis reflected a consistent lack of theoretical research, as well as a general inability of Marxist thought to predict the trends of the modern world. Arab communists, with the exception of the LCP, were trapped in the Soviet orbit awaiting direction from Moscow.

Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse and the concomitant ideological crisis, three main trends of thought emerged. First, there was a call for a complete ideological and political transformation, and a total break with the doctrines and forms of the past, including renaming their respective parties. For example, the Palestine Communist Party changed its name to the People's Party. Its General Secretary explained the move by arguing:

All the communist parties focused on the social problems, but we have to focus on the struggle for the land and the country. We need to have a country before being able to engage in a social struggle, and that's why we decided to change our name.<sup>58</sup>

Similar, though perhaps not as abrupt, changes took place in other Arab communist parties, particularly in Tunisia, Algeria, and Saudi Arabia. Although none of those parties has formally rejected the concept of socialism, nevertheless, for them it has become an idea which is vague and remote in time. In practice this has come to mean a complete abandonment of Marxist ideology.<sup>59</sup> A second, conservative trend, aimed instead at adhering to the traditional orthodox communist heritage, continues to expect the victory of the working class on the world stage. Khalid Bakdash

became the representative of this trend when he wrote in his memoirs, "Nothing has changed. Marxism will win. Capitalism will collapse forever and the victory of the working class will come."<sup>60</sup>

However, this conservative trend, represented by some Syrian and Jordanian communists has proved to be impractical and unable to maintain popular support.<sup>61</sup> Under the pressures of life, a majority of the Arab communists have begun to accept partial and gradual change, thereby inevitably transforming their doctrine, organization, and politics. This trend was noticeable, particularly among the Lebanese, and, to a lesser extent, among the Iraqi and Sudanese communists.<sup>62</sup> As one of the leading Lebanese communists, Karim Morue, stressed in an interview in September, 1993:

Our theoretical resources are no longer limited to Marxism-Leninism. We want to include all schools of Marxism such as Koutsky, Rosa Luxemburg, Gramsci, Mao, etc. We have understood well the need to develop the theory in order to face a changing world.<sup>63</sup>

The crisis of the 1990s has also led to an explosion of debate, and to several lesser avenues of thought within the Arab communist movement, including the ideas that:

- The collapse of the Soviet bloc was a defeat for Stalinism and a victory for Marxism, and there should now be a rereading of fundamental Marxist theses separate from Stalinist distortions, reformism, religious thought, bourgeois nationalism, and liberal democracy.
- An opening-up to different political trends and views operating in the Arab world is now necessary, to reconnect the communist movement and bring it into proper touch with local conditions and contexts.
- A new Arab revolutionary movement must be constructed which penetrates and includes all existing revolutionary trends in the Arab political arena, with Marxists either participating as parties and intellectuals to prove the worth of Marxist thought or fail and leave the space for new movements.
- Marxism must be enriched with realistic contributions based on experience, and the addition of new concepts and themes, which better enable scientific Marxism to stand in the way of capitalist expansion.
- Marxists should open discussions with Islamist trends based on commonalities of opposition and even utilize some Islamist thought.

### **Regional cooperation of the Arab communist parties**

The historical development of regional cooperation between the communist and workers' parties of the Arab East was an important factor in the transformation of their mutual relations with the Soviet Union. In the 1960s, the cooperation became more formally established, in the wake of the

de-Stalinization of the Soviet bloc countries and the loosening of Moscow's control over other communist parties. Starting in December, 1964, and continuing until the early 1990s, the delegates of the Arab communist parties were meeting "somewhere in the Middle East" in order to "discuss developments in the area and the state of political action of the communist forces in the light of these developments."<sup>64</sup>

Like the whole of the Middle Eastern area and the worldwide communist movement, the ideological and political content of the meetings, and their numerous statements and declarations, had obviously undergone a long and complex process of change. From the beginning of their regional meetings, Arab communist parties showed their predominantly Arab and local focus of interest and involvement. As time passed, the more general disputes and problems of the communist world and Marxist-Leninist ideology, which had occupied such a large part of their pronouncements in the 1960s, and even into the 1970s, became much more limited until, finally, they became merely symbolic in their scope and political importance.

The July, 1968 conference, among its eight major statements, included at the top of the list the items on "The communist movement in the world and the "suspicious independence" phenomenon which is led by Czechoslovakia with inspiration from Western imperialism." Another item expressed "the assurance that the Soviet Union is 'loyal to Marxist-Leninist communism'."<sup>65</sup> A statement issued by the mid-December, 1976 meeting began from the broader context of the alleged successes of peace-loving forces in Europe and the "chief role in achieving detente" of the Soviet Union.<sup>66</sup> In contrast, the statements in the 1980s were almost completely devoid of such topics, and sometimes barely mentioned the role and cooperation of the USSR and the other socialist countries. The communist and workers' parties of the Arab East, after the outbreak of the Palestinian intifada on December 15, 1987, mentioned the alliance with the communist countries briefly, and only in a purely pragmatic way, as a possible counterbalance to Israeli military power.<sup>67</sup>

In their first statement in December, 1964, the Arab communists called for:

The maximum brotherly creative initiative in order to create and strengthen an alliance of all revolutionary forces . . . and the establishment of the closest relations of cooperation between progressive parties, organizations and movements in the Arab world.<sup>68</sup>

The following statement of April, 1966 spoke of the necessity for uniting all progressive forces, irrespective of previous differences, within each country and on a pan-Arab level,<sup>69</sup> and the 1975 document called for the cooperation between the communist parties and the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party in Syria and Iraq.<sup>70</sup> In the 1960s, Arab communists also exhibited, at least in principle, a positive attitude toward the program of Arab unity, and

supported the ideas of Arab national liberation. The development of their common stand on the Palestinian issue is, from that aspect, the most instructive, as has already been discussed.

The Arab communists also proved, however, to be unusually sensitive to the defense and promotion of the democratic principles, which both communist and Arab countries frequently ignored. At their first meeting in 1964, they had already expressed the opinion that "the UAR which had entered the non-capitalist road of development . . . could advance to socialism if these achievements were accompanied by 'a broadening of democracy'."<sup>71</sup> The practical outcome of this assessment was their July, 1968 opinion that the 1967 defeat of the progressive Arab countries was, among other factors, caused by "snuffing out democratic freedoms, and preventing progressive and patriotic forces from publicly practicing their political activities."<sup>72</sup>

In the 1970s, the communist and workers' parties of the Arab East, facing what they considered to be "dangerous developments in the inter-Arab arena," came to the conclusion that "the question of democratic freedoms has acquired increasing importance."<sup>73</sup> They expressed their view as follows:

Granting of democratic freedoms to the masses, respect for the right to express their viewpoint, to independent political party, trade union and professional organization is an imperative demand of all Arab national and progressive forces, a slogan of struggle serving to rally the broadest political forces and masses.<sup>74</sup>

The 1981 statement stressed in concrete terms the need to:

work for freedom of speech, the press, assembly, political and trade union activity . . . for the establishment of constitutional institutions elected in a truly democratic way and the construction of a state apparatus on a democratic basis with the establishment of popular control over it.<sup>75</sup>

In the years to come, all these goals were to remain a permanent part of the Arab communist parties' joint statements, and a common ideological orientation.

The parties also extended their concept of democracy to the "national minorities living in the Arab countries."<sup>76</sup> Although the April, 1966 conference opposed the separatist movement in Southern Sudan lest it establish "a puppet, reactionary regime in the south, to be used as a base against the Arab and African patriotic liberation movements,"<sup>77</sup> it also called for the "creation of suitable conditions for the enhancement of the unity of the country on a basis of equality and democracy."<sup>78</sup> The conference also called for an end to the war against the Kurds in Iraq, and the beginning of a

peaceful, democratic solution to the Kurdish problem on the basis of recognizing the right of the Kurdish population to autonomy within the Iraqi Republic.<sup>79</sup> The defense of Kurdish rights was destined to become one of the major features of the many subsequent Arab communist parties' statements and declarations. In 1981, the parties declared "their support for the Kurdish people's right to self-determination" and saw "the task of the Kurdish people's national liberation as inseparable from the struggle for democracy."<sup>80</sup> The Arab communists wanted to implement "a democratic regime that would offer the national minorities, rights in administration and culture."<sup>81</sup>

Although Arab communists never wanted to cut their links with the Soviet Union, and isolate themselves from the socialist bloc countries whose help had always been of great value to them, by their regular common meetings and cooperation they were able, over time, nevertheless, to create for themselves a genuine independent strength and achieve the necessary social support among the population of the region. Due to this, they were able to express views and opinions repeatedly which, although not necessarily contradictory to the official Soviet ideology, were nevertheless quite different from the policies of existing communist countries. Their slowly acquired independent position, which was based on Arab popular demand, also enabled them to survive, at least the first period after the collapse of Soviet and eastern European communism and to instigate a fresh effort to continue their activities under the strikingly different circumstances of the new era.<sup>82</sup>

In order to coordinate the new and already fully independent political line, the Arab communists held a conference in Damascus in August, 1990.<sup>83</sup> The conference, which was attended by 11 parties of the Arab East, evaluated the internal conditions of Arab communist parties and the situation in the area, and ended with the "full agreement" of its participants.<sup>84</sup> New ideological vistas were perceived, and new practical directions for common efforts established. However, only time will tell whether Arab communists, liberated from Moscow's control, but also lacking Soviet support, can overcome their problems and become an integral part of the emerging political reality.

## **The end of the Arab world and the Soviet Union**

Gorbachev came to power in the spring of 1985 at a time of Soviet economic stagnation and growing social and political trouble in the socialist bloc countries. As he admitted himself on June 28, 1988, to the All Union CPSU conference: "world socialism is living through a difficult and crucial period."<sup>85</sup> He further recognized the need for a thorough-going evaluation of the previous ideological and political principles, and believed that, in order to be able to focus on the urgent domestic problems, he needed a different kind of international environment, conducive to his projected

reforms, and with as few external threats, tensions, and far-flung obligations as possible. As a representative of the New Soviet middle class,<sup>86</sup> he was relatively free from the inherited burden of the ideological obligations to working-class solidarity, and sympathy toward the national liberation movements and Third World interests. Instead, his goals were to find an accommodation with the West, especially with the US, and work for a reintegration of his country into a "common European home,"<sup>87</sup> which would hopefully provide access to Western capital, technology, and cultural achievements. For that purpose, he was also ready to repudiate the previous Soviet theory of the "two world markets" and the non-capitalist path of development, and, instead, recommended an effort toward inclusion in the global work market.

Some of his advisers argued that, "due to the present world economic integration, dependency affects all countries"<sup>88</sup> and that developing countries should participate actively in world trade, and in the international division of labor, not only because of their increasing demands for imported machinery, equipment, materials, and technical know-how, but also to expand the export of their own manufacturers.<sup>89</sup>

Apparently following Lenin's idea of peaceful coexistence between socialism and capitalism as "consonant with the very nature of socialism, and with its principled commitment to peace," Gorbachev emptied the communist world-view of its revolutionary perspectives, replacing them instead with a vision of harmonious inter-class and inter-state cooperation based on a "collective search for a balance of interests of all countries on an equal basis."<sup>90</sup> His "new political thinking" was, in essence, "a rejection of the Iron Curtain against Western culture and against Western market forces,"<sup>91</sup> and opened the way for further progress of the economic, ideological, and political liberalization and Westernization of the rapidly declining Soviet empire.

The new, subsequently elaborated and implemented, foreign policy was going to be based on de-ideologization, pragmatism, and a non-confrontational approach toward the US and other Western interests.<sup>92</sup> Its far-reaching implications for Soviet-Third World relations, were, however, not immediately felt.<sup>93</sup> In fact, especially during his initial period, and sometimes even on later occasions, Gorbachev wanted to keep the appearances of a basically unchanged friendly and supportive role toward Third World peoples, particularly in the adjacent region of the Middle East, which was strategically extremely important for the USSR.

In April, 1987, the Soviets seemed to emphasize the continuity of their Middle Eastern policies. In his speech, delivered at the dinner in honor of President Hafiz Assad of Syria on April 24, 1987, Gorbachev outlined his major Middle East policies, emphasizing that<sup>94</sup> (1) the settlement of the Middle East issues was an important part of building up the comprehensive system of international security; (2) the Soviet Union continued to support the Palestinian right to self-determination and to have a homeland;

(3) Israel should settle for a just peace and establish good-neighbor relations with the Arab world and that there would be no normalization of Soviet relations with Israel without a Middle East settlement; and (4) an international Middle East conference of all concerned sides to bring about a settlement should be convened.

A Tass News Agency statement on December 20, 1987 continued on this major theme of the Soviet Middle East policies and denounced the “signing of a U.S. –Israel memorandum on mutual understanding, which gives Israel a military cooperation status of the U.S.’s NATO allies” as “encouraging the venturesome policy of the Tel-Aviv hawks.”<sup>95</sup> What could bring a just and lasting peace to this region, the statement continued “is an international conference sponsored by the UN and attended by the five permanent members of the Security Council and all interested parties, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.”<sup>96</sup>

Even as late as June, 1990, during his summit meeting with President Bush, Gorbachev stated, following Arab demands, that the Soviet Union may consider holding up Jewish immigration unless Israel guaranteed that Soviet Jews would no longer be resettled in the Occupied Territories.<sup>97</sup> Such verbal statements and the symbolic gestures, such as upgrading the status of the PLO mission in Moscow to full embassy status and appointing an ambassador to the PLO executive committee in January, 1990,<sup>98</sup> were intended to alleviate Arab anxieties and to preserve still substantial Soviet influences in the Arab world. At the same time, however, the new Soviet leader and his advisers, disregarding the Palestinian Intifada which had been in progress since 1987, worked hard to improve Soviet–Israeli relations by opening the gate for mass Soviet Jewish immigration to Israel and by putting pressure on the PLO to make diplomatic concessions and recognize Israel.<sup>99</sup> Moscow was also quite blunt about the curtailment or even termination of its previous military support to friendly Arab states, thus particularly disappointing Syria’s long-sought desire for military parity with Israel.<sup>100</sup>

The subservient role of the USSR to American interests and wishes during the Gulf War, and the ensuing final dissolution of the Soviet Union in December, 1991, brought the Soviet role in the Middle East to an abrupt end. The successor states of the once mighty Soviet Union, including Russia itself and other post-communist states of eastern Europe, based their policy toward the Middle East on their own narrowly understood national self-interest, and at least initially expressed openly pro-American and pro-Israeli sympathies.



## 6 The crisis of communism in the Arab world

### Retrospect and prospects

With the decline of the colonial powers and rising dissatisfaction with the West in the Middle East and North Africa at the end of World War II, Arab communist parties were presented with an opportunity to become a leading element in the overall revolutionary movement in the region. However, their inability to lead successful revolutionary action, which could have effected radical social and ideological transformations, resulted in the forfeiture of this opportunity first to the forces of Nasserism and other indigenous revolutionary movements and, more recently, to the Islamic movements, which assumed this transformative role. This failure to act can be attributed to important shortcomings in both the theory and the praxis of the Arab communist parties.

#### **Problems at a theoretical level: Arab communists and “scientific socialism”**

Analytically, the Arab communist parties were heirs to a form of dialectical materialism which has its roots in Hegel, Marx, and Engels by way of Georgi Plekhanov, Lenin, and Stalin.<sup>1</sup> This form of dialectical materialism stood, and for many still stands, as the epistemological and ontological core of the Arab communists’ world-view, thereby providing the “science” to their socialism. Based on these principles, as filtered through Marx and, later, communists, the Arab communist parties tried to recognize and transform the world in which they lived by propounding the general laws of development of nature, society, and of human thought and action.<sup>2</sup>

In practice, however, the majority of the analytical literature of Arab communist parties is notable for its inability to make any significant theoretical contributions to social thought. Arab Communist literature – which is full of praise for the insights provided by dialectical materialism – tended to be uncritical in content. Furthermore, the literature is indicative of a tendency toward an overly submissive application of allegedly universal socialist principles as propounded by the Soviet Union, resulting in a simplification of Marxian scholarship.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, the Arab communist movement (with the exception of the Sudanese Communist Party and later the Lebanese factions), largely as a result of its subservient relationship to the Soviet Union and the pragmatic maneuvers of the CPSU, failed to become involved in the intellectual advancement of Marxist and Socialist discourse taking place throughout the world. The works of significant anti-colonial socialists and Marxists such as Frantz Fanon and Mao Tse-Tung have rarely been debated, translated or applied by most Arab communists. Indeed, Fanon's famous book *The Wretched of the Earth*, which was inspired by the Algerian rebellion against the French, had profound resonance among anti-colonialist movements throughout Africa and Southeast Asia, and among sections of the Arab left, yet it rarely echoed among the leadership of the Arab communist parties that were tied to Soviet dogma. The same can be said for the works of Western and European theoreticians and activists, which were so influential in constructing the radical movements that rocked the West in the 1960s and 1970s. For example, the ideas of Antonio Gramsci, Rosa Luxemburg, Errico Malatesta, Guy Debord, and even Ernesto "Che" Guevara, so frequently cited by socialists throughout the world, seem to have had little, if any impact on the communist movement in the Arab world.

### **Rigidity in interpretation of socialist thought**

The Arab communists' slavish adherence, until the mid-1960s, to an eastern European tradition of dialectical materialism points to a second significant problem at the theoretical level: namely, a failure to absorb major developments in socialist thought. As a result of Stalinist control over Marxist interpretation, and because the Arab communist parties were armed with little more than Marx via Engels, Lenin, and Stalin – a simplified, Sovietized version of a nineteenth century analysis of Western European capitalism – Arab communists were ill-equipped to adapt such notions to the Arab milieu. Up to the late 1960s, nowhere was this more apparent than in the Arab communist parties' view of socialist transformation and the role of the national bourgeoisie.

Marx propounded a socialist transformation in the context of developed capitalist economies by way of the revolutionary activity of the proletariat. In this context he held that:

A radical social revolution is tied to certain historical conditions of revolution; these are its prerequisites. It is therefore only possible where, with capitalist production, the industrial proletariat occupies at least a significant position among the mass of the people.<sup>4</sup>

However, Marx did not clearly posit an immutable linear path of social development, and was critical of those who attempted to use his analysis

as a general “superhistorical” theory.<sup>5</sup> There was an evident disparity between the historical Marxist analysis of the evolution of European capitalism in relation to the realities of Arab society, which had developed under a divergent cultural, historical, and economic milieu. In spite of verbal assertions to the contrary, both early Arab Marxists and their communist successors did little to accommodate this actuality into their theoretical analysis. In contrast to Europe, where the development of socialist ideas had been generated and acted upon, amid the immediate social pressures of rapid industrialization, the Arab world first encountered Marxism after World War I at the purely intellectual level, as a result of study in or of the West, or through contact with European socialists in the Middle East. As a result of both this and a concomitant lack of suitable social conditions, early Arab Marxists failed to adapt Marxism to the conditions of the region where capitalism was only incipient, and where the national bourgeoisie, too weak to accumulate significant amounts of capital, merely acted as compradors for Western imperialist interests. In the Middle East, semi-feudal relations of production still prevailed, and a class-conscious proletariat was virtually non-existent. Moreover, the limited proletariat that did exist had narrow ties to the peasantry – the majority of the population.

In addition, early Arab Marxists acquired and transmitted to their successors, Marx and Engels’ devaluation of nationalism per se as an effective and progressive social force. The later adoption of Leninism as revolutionary theory and praxis by the local communist parties did little to remedy this inherited theoretical shortcoming. In essence, Marxism-Leninism perceived Third World peoples and their national movements only as tactical and temporary allies at varying stages in the worldwide class struggle. However, this Marxist-Leninist ideological position was too narrow and too complex to attract the masses, and the problem was further compounded by direct communist attacks on religious beliefs that alienated popular opinion even further. Moreover, as the membership of many Marxist-based parties consisted of a disproportionate number of minorities – Jews in Palestine, Jews and Christians in Egypt, Christians in Syria and Lebanon, and Jews and Kurds in Iraq – and as many European immigrants also played an important role in the Egyptian and Palestinian parties, their appeal to the Arab Muslim majority, and their limited ability to understand and sympathize with the localized feelings and interests of the majority of their own populations was extremely limited.

In particular, Arab communist parties – adhering to a narrow and simplified pre-Soviet revolutionary reading of Marx – long insisted on the establishment of a “democratic bourgeois” transitional stage as a “historical necessity” before socialism could be established.<sup>6</sup> Amid the somewhat scornful indifference of other Arab leftists, until the 1960s, local communists were still questioning whether a socialist revolution could take place in the Arab countries where industrialization was still in its infant stages.

Consequently, because they failed to recognize that the Marxist model of revolution in advanced capitalist society was largely irrelevant to the Arab world, and did not take into consideration the Chinese experience, Arab communists were inclined to believe that any talk of a socialist solution was inconceivable before the development of capitalism and the maturity of productive forces.

In contrast, the Arab left opined that every country and every revolutionary socialist movement possessed its own historical experience and its own objective possibilities and that the path to socialism was not to be found set down in any “sacred” text. Furthermore, they held that the most serious danger facing a revolutionary was the temptation to surrender his or her own analytical responsibility and fall into the trap of facile solutions and dogmatism. Non-communist Arab leftists not only rejected a Marxian model that presupposed the necessity of a generally developed capitalism, but also questioned the feasibility of capitalist development within the organizational framework of the groups then currently holding power.

In analyzing the national movement early in the course of the Algerian revolution, Frantz Fanon warned against yielding to the bourgeois elements. He explained that, in countries forced to be underdeveloped through the realities of colonialism, the national bourgeoisie – lacking technical resources and, therefore, not economically viable – was doomed to failure because it had little chance whatsoever of playing the progressive role its counterpart played in the West.<sup>7</sup> The Western bourgeoisie – trained, dynamic, and venturesome – initiated the process of capital accumulation, laid the foundation of modern industry and commerce, and gave the nation at least a minimum of prosperity. The function of the colony’s bourgeoisie, on the other hand, had been largely that of an exploitative group – an intermediary between the metropolitan economic interests and the colonial masses. Moreover, this bourgeois class, lacking the support of the masses, would fail to establish a democratic society and thus, Fanon stressed, it had almost no choice but to establish a fascist dictatorship and police state to defend itself against the misery and anger of the masses. Therefore, Fanon concluded, there was virtually no justification for underdeveloped countries to pass through the bourgeois phase of democratic national revolution in order to advance to a socialist society.<sup>8</sup>

Reiterating the same theme in a somewhat different manner, President Gamal Abdul Nasser affirmed that “socialism” was the only viable route to economic and social progress:

In the countries forced to remain underdeveloped, capital in its natural development is no longer able to lead the economic takeoff . . . [whereas] . . . the great capitalist monopolies in the advanced countries developed relying on the exploitation of the sources of wealth in the colonies.<sup>9</sup>

Nasser concluded that the development of world monopolies left only two alternatives for local capitalism in the countries aspiring to progress:

First: Local Capitalism is no longer capable of competition without the customs protections paid for by the masses.

Second: The only hope left for local capitalism to develop is to relate itself to the movements of world monopolies, following in their footsteps, thus turning into a mere appendage and dragging the country to doom.<sup>10</sup>

The indigenous entrepreneurial middle-class elements were manifestly too small to supply the funds needed for a vast capital investment.<sup>11</sup> The weakness of the national revenue and of private savings, and the orientation of local capital toward speculative activities were further factors that worked against the capitalist path of development.<sup>12</sup>

By the mid-1960s, Arab communist parties somewhat modified their position and recognized the possibility of a non-capitalist road to socialism. This "road," they suggested, may pass through a "national-democratic" stage, during which a united front of various progressive elements, and not simply communists, may play the leading role. Characteristically, this change seems to have been brought about by shifts in Soviet foreign policy from the mid-1950s, as well as by the increasing Soviet emphasis, following Stalin's death, on close ties with non-socialist "progressive" regimes. It is characteristic of Arab communist parties that the acceptance of such "non-capitalist paths" was attributed to the growing strength of the "socialist world system" (i.e. the Soviet Union and its allies), rather than to any initial theoretical or analytical shortcomings or to their own theoretical innovation.<sup>13</sup> The suggestion, however, that this "socialist world system" was in fact a series of dictatorships maintained through a subordinate relationship to the Soviet Union, and had little in common with the concept of international socialism, was an absolute taboo for the majority of Arab communist parties and was a major factor in the formation of a number of splinter groups, as occurred in 1967 in the cases of the Iraqi Communist Party Central Leadership faction versus the Central Committee and the Ila al-Amam group in the LCP. This observation is further emphasized by their inability to comment upon, or even to take note of, the significant periodic uprisings within this system by workers demanding a more authentic socialism. The working-class uprisings of Moscow and St Petersburg in 1921,<sup>14</sup> East Germany in 1953, Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1956 and 1968, and Poland in 1956, 1970, and 1980–81, all challenged the legitimacy of the Soviet Union-led system as the vanguard of world socialism, and indicated serious inconsistencies between Soviet practice and the spirit of Marxism. Most conspicuous about these uprisings is that they were informed by the same theoretical tools that the Arab communist parties had at their hands, namely Marxism-Leninism as

filtered through Soviet state-controlled education and media. According to Chris Harman, the former editor of the *Socialist Worker*:

The official ideology of the eastern regimes may have been “Marxist-Leninism”. But it was the challengers of those regimes who based themselves of Marx’s fundamental premise, “The emancipation of the working class is the act of the working class itself”, and Lenin’s slogan, “All power to the workers’ councils.”<sup>15</sup>

The opportunity to challenge the official world-view and orthodoxy of the CPSU by Arab communists had been repeatedly offered not only by these uprisings, but also by the Chinese experience and Tito’s rejection of Soviet influence over the development of Yugoslavia – many of these events occurring well before Stalin’s death. China and Yugoslavia both represented states that could offer alternative alignments, or, at the very least, provided an opportunity to utilize a strategy of non-alignment within the “world socialist system.” Examples of Arab communists utilizing China as a potential base of support are rare and tended to occur only in dire circumstances, such as when the USSR recognized the UAR, which was vociferously anti-communist. However, the examples of the uprisings and the possibilities presented by alternative state alignments were generally ignored and failed to bring about any significant changes in the relationship of the Arab communist parties to the USSR. Instead, when the reassessment of non-capitalist paths to socialism eventually did occur, it happened in conjunction with changing Soviet policy, and tended not to represent any form of independent ideological development or innovation, but rather a slavish adherence to Soviet hegemony. In the rare and exceptional cases where innovation actually did take place, it typically occurred in the context of a rebellion from Soviet orthodoxy and party discipline, often resulting in the splintering of the parties into hostile factions. The evolution of the communist parties of Syria and Lebanon is exemplary of this phenomenon and should be considered in such a context, as the outcome of this internal conflict tended to determine the potential of any given communist organization to strengthen its influence within its socio-political and socio-economic environment.

### **The evolution of Syrian and Lebanese communism**

Over the course of the twentieth century the communist movement in Syria and Lebanon can be followed in four distinct stages. The first stage, spanning the 1920s, was marked by active labor mobilization and organizational expansion into new centers outside of Beirut and Damascus, while the party was organized in a largely participatory manner and reflected a Syrian notion of existence within a framework of Marxist epistemology.<sup>16</sup> The party played a vanguard role in terms of organizing Lebanese and Syrian

workers and articulating their class interests in opposition to patterns of feudalism, and institutions of colonialism and capitalism.<sup>17</sup>

The second stage was brought about by Khalid Bakdash's coup, and the centralization of the party with the establishment of a cult of personality, modeled along the lines of Stalin's Soviet Union.<sup>18</sup> At this time a strengthening of party discipline and dogma also emerged, reflective of the changes in organizational structure. The party rapidly ceased to play a significant role in labor activism and unquestioningly endorsed policies put forth by the Soviet Union irrespective of whether they were antagonistic to the Arab world or not.<sup>19</sup> Further, in 1943, the party separated into separate Syrian and Lebanese parties in order to more easily facilitate the consolidation of Bakdash's control over the Syrian group and isolate opposition, by splitting it among the two parties. To exemplify further the arbitrary nature of Bakdash's rule over the party, these two organizations were reunified in 1950, placing the Lebanese branch once more under his direct control. In conjunction with this process was the further absorption of the world communist movement into the Soviet state through the dissolution of the Comintern in 1943. The already blurred lines between Soviet policy and communist ideology ceased to exist as a factor in communist movements throughout the Arab world.<sup>20</sup> Throughout the second stage, the party, much like the CPSU, lost touch with the grass-roots of the Syrian and Lebanese working classes. Instead, it focused on establishing itself as a political force, building political alliances and assisting in the establishment of a national liberation front, a policy dictated by the USSR.<sup>21</sup>

In the third stage of the party's evolution, Khalid Bakdash tethered the party to the Ba'ath government in an attempt to acquire legitimacy, sacrificing the remnants of its ideological consistency and forfeiting any political autonomy.<sup>22</sup> However, as the Syrian party became essentially moribund, the Lebanese groups managed to splinter off, despite repression from Bakdash, and effectively rejuvenated the LCP.

The fourth stage was marked by the efforts of both the Lebanese and Syrian parties to break the stranglehold of Bakdash's grip. Only the Lebanese group was successful and began a long-overdue struggle to develop internal democracy, to find relevance in their socio-political and socio-economic environment, and to establish an authentic Marxist-Leninist praxis. The Lebanese civil war and the Israeli occupation presented Lebanese society with a profound crisis and the Lebanese party was able to reassert itself effectively as a political force, utilizing the tools of scientific socialism and dialectical analysis to demystify Marxism and reconnect itself with its "base." By the resolution of the conflict, the party had managed to develop the theoretical tools that allowed it to attain deep insight into the nature of Lebanese society, including internal and external forces and constraints that acted to shape Lebanese socioeconomic and sociopolitical realities.<sup>23</sup> By the end of the 1990s, the party stood out among

Arab communist parties in that it was capable of initiating bold strategies in the construction of a nascent civil society in Lebanon.

However, the Syrian Communist Party maintained its dependency on the CPSU, both financially and ideologically, and allowed Soviet policy to dictate its positions. Consequently, the party became ossified and suffered a serious crisis upon the dissolution of the USSR. The party had failed to develop any real Marxist praxis and theory or to contribute to the international development of Marxist ideas, and had essentially alienated its base, causing it to become largely irrelevant to the Syrian working-class. Furthermore, this lack of working-class representation was partially responsible for generating a scenario wherein civil society remained highly underdeveloped in terms of the labor movement. The oppressed classes of Syria were forced to look elsewhere for avenues of potential liberation, most notably to the emerging Islamist organizations.

### **The Arab communists and the national question**

According to Arab nationalists of the 1950s and 1960s, the Arab nation no longer needed to give evidence of the unity binding its peoples. They asserted that Arab unity is based on Arab existence itself,<sup>24</sup> and that the Arab nation, extending from the Atlantic to the Gulf, is bound together by the ties of language and history, forming one community of culture and interest. This interpretation not only reveals the Arab frame of mind, especially of the 1960s, but it also reflected some important socio-political aspirations in the region. The failure of the communist parties to take these national aspirations into account resulted in the confrontation between Arab nationalist and local communist parties in 1959 (during Qasim's regime in Iraq, and Nasser's in the UAR).

Arab nationalists insist that Arab communists almost missed this point completely. Until 1950s, Arab communists adhered to Stalin's thesis that "a nation is historically evolved, a stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological makeup manifested in a community of culture."<sup>25</sup> Since the Arab nation, divided and dominated by different political systems and economic institutions, could not meet the above criteria, Arab communists generally refused to acknowledge its existence. Instead, they maintained the notion that the community of economic life and culture within the regional divisions of the Arab world each had a separate experience of its own.

In accepting Stalin's thesis, Arab communists (with the exception of the Sudanese Communist Party) committed a common but serious error: confounding nations and nation states. Insofar as the communist parties could therefore be described as nationalist, their nationalism has typically been directed at developments within local political units in the Arab world (patriotism or "Wataniya"). In contrast, the Arab nationalist movement



continually strove to achieve a more fundamental unity of the entire Arab nation (nationalism or “Qawmiyya”).

In essence, it is this point around which conflict between Arab communist and Arab nationalist movements focused. Local communists, during the 1950s and 1960s, refused to join forces with the Arab nationalists in fulfillment of their objectives, insisting that Arab nationalism was the creation of the bourgeois class which sought to consolidate its power over all classes in order to use them for their own selfish interests.<sup>26</sup> Local communists accused the Arab nationalist movement of being a sentimental and artificial movement with a fascist content. Moreover, Arab communists traditionally described the Arab nationalist movement as being an “imperialist trick” designed to obscure the national struggle against the imperialists.<sup>27</sup>

The assertions of the communists were correct in many cases and the nationalists were often leaders who were obsessed with establishing complete control over a population, often bearing serious fascist overtones. The nationalist tyrannies that exist throughout the Arab world today reflect the accuracy of the criticisms of the Arab communists. However, their internationalist alternative to nationalism lacked theoretical weight, displayed pseudo-colonial subservience to Soviet policy, and failed to connect itself to the material and historical concerns of the general Arab populace. These significant shortcomings, primarily due to the lack of development in socialist theory among the mainstream of Arab communists, ensured that internationalism would fail to challenge nationalism and win over the hearts and minds of the Arab world’s working and peasant classes.

Despite a growing concern with national problems, Arab communists were rarely able to establish a cooperative relationship with nationalists. Instead, they emphasized internationalism and called upon all socialist forces to break down the national barriers in order to create an international solidarity capable of accomplishing the tasks of the working classes.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, events have shown that, in the name of international solidarity, Arab communists were willing to forfeit Arab national interests to the interests of Soviet geopolitical and international strategy.<sup>29</sup> The Soviet Union, according to the communists, was the focal point of the world revolutionary movement, and they unconditionally supported and defended the USSR until the late 1960s, when questions finally began to be raised within the Arab communist movement regarding the incompatibility of interests between Arab countries and the Soviet state.

### **Problems at the level of revolutionary praxis**

The failure of Arab political parties to develop a viable plural political culture is the result of a host of political errors in judgement, personal and organizational flaws, and the overwhelming influences of foreign actors in the development of militaristic ruling cliques. Like their liberal, nationalist,

socialist, and religious-based adversaries, the political actions and positions of the Arab communist parties often appeared to be capricious, inappropriate, or both. It is possible to trace many of these shortcomings to two features of the Arab communist parties themselves. The first of these features – that of inadequacies at the theoretical level – has already been examined. However, because revolutionary theory and praxis are intimately related, theoretical shortcomings are necessarily manifested in the concrete political activity of the Arab communist parties.

The second feature of the Arab communist parties that limited their success concerned an almost blind devotion to the Soviet Union and its social system. Loyalty to Moscow – as Moscow was seen to play a “fundamental role in developing the whole of international life, [and] in developing human society as a whole”<sup>30</sup> – has often been the common denominator of local communist parties in the Arab world. As a result, Arab communist parties often found their political positions and activities dictated by the Soviet Union’s tactical or strategic interests, or by its world-view, rather than by local conditions.

### **The national liberation struggle**

The CPSL was founded in 1924, and recruited its first members from among the minority groups in the area that were not integrated into majority class structures. It therefore is not surprising that the party did not attach itself to the national struggle against the mandatory power when in 1936 a Popular Front coalition came into power in Paris. At that time, the party – which had become quasi-legal – dropped its outspoken revolutionary demands, and its leader Khalid Bakdash called upon all nationalists to cooperate with the French authorities in the country. Furthermore, Syrian–Lebanese communists did not hesitate to approve the Franco-Syrian Treaty, which was initiated by the new French government. In doing so, they offended popular Syrian anti-colonialists, particularly when they called upon popular Syrian forces to accommodate themselves to the mandatory power in order to carry out the provisions of a treaty that provided nothing more than a promise to grant self-governing institutions sometime in the future.<sup>31</sup>

During this time, CPS leaders invited French communist deputies to visit Syria and Lebanon and participate in their educational programmes and anti-fascist activities. However, this honeymoon did not last long. Soon afterwards, the Soviet “motherland” came to terms with the fascists when the Treaty of Nonaggression Between Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was concluded on August 23, 1939. The Arab communists who were engaged in activities and agitation against the notorious theories of the German fascists had to swallow their pride and accommodate themselves to the new Soviet line.<sup>32</sup>

Similarly, the Iraqi communists initially were among those who came to the fore after having thrown in their lot in support of the coup of General Bakr Sidqi in 1936 (although shortly afterwards they recanted their endorsement). After a series of coups, a national Iraqi government under the leadership of Rashid Ali al-Gailani came into power. When that government revolted against British imperialism and its allies in the Royal Palace in May, 1941, the Iraqi communists were among the first to rally in support of the revolutionary regime. But it was hardly a month later when they suddenly reversed their unconditional support and attacked the government, accusing it of selling out the country to the German fascists.<sup>33</sup> To understand what brought this sudden change of heart, one should recall that on June 22, 1941 the Nazi–Soviet Treaty ended and the Soviet Union became the ally of Britain and France against the Axis. Later, in 1958, the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) collaborated with the military regime of General ‘Abdul Karim Qasim and was initially rewarded for this support with seats in the government, temporarily establishing the ICP as one of the most politically influential communist parties in the Arab world. However, Qasim almost immediately dropped left-wing elements from the government, leaving the communists greatly weakened and devoid of popular support.

Other communist parties were equally ineffective during this period. The Egyptian Communist Party, for example, although one of the oldest parties in the region (founded in 1920), failed to play any significant role in Egyptian politics. Like its sister Arab communist parties, the Egyptian Communist Party drew its members almost exclusively from among the national minority groups.<sup>34</sup> It failed to understand the specific features and conditions of the Egyptian national movement and thus failed to contribute any significant thrust to that movement.

### **The question of Palestine**

Throughout most of the evolution of the Palestine issue, Arab communist parties faithfully repeated the Soviet line. Following the establishment of the British Mandate, Arab communist parties in general, and the (Jewish–Arab) PCP in particular, stressed the joint Jewish–Arab class struggle against local bourgeois and feudal elements, and against British imperialism. Zionism was not identified as a major issue to the Palestinian people, and attitudes toward the local Palestinian nationalist leadership varied.

Until 1929, the Palestinian nationalist leadership was seen largely as reactionary. After the 1929 riots, and until 1938, the PCP attempted to play a more active part in the nationalist struggle and emphasized the “progressive” anti-imperialism of Palestinian nationalist leaders such as Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini. From 1938 until August, 1939 (and the signing of the Nazi–Soviet Treaty) such leaders were condemned as fascist agents because

of their pro-German sympathies. After August, 1939, the Palestinian nationalist leadership was once more labeled “progressive,” until the German invasion of the USSR in June, 1941 brought back to them the old title of “fascist agents.”

Similarly, Arab communist parties supported the Soviet Union’s immediate post-war calls for the establishment of a bi-national state in Palestine, until Gromyko’s 1947 announcement of support for partition led them hurriedly to hide or alter their positions. Since that date, Arab communist parties have generally omitted mention of the USSR’s significant role in the establishment of Israel, instead concentrating on Soviet support for the Arab cause in the 1956, 1967, and 1973 Arab–Israeli wars.<sup>35</sup>

However, the evolution of the PCP is much more complex than this analysis would initially indicate, as it was forced to tangle directly with the often conflicting nature of national liberation(s), its allegiance to international socialism, and support for the working classes in a highly sensitive arena, from a very early stage in the party’s development. This struggle was produced by material conditions on the ground in Palestine, how the mixed Arab–Jewish organization interacted with the influx of Jewish nationalists (including a large proportion of nationalist-socialists), and the rapid emergence of popular Arab nationalist sentiments. The PCP, while still predominantly Jewish, became a vociferous critic of Zionism upon its acceptance into the Communist International in 1924, issuing calls to Jewish workers to part from Zionism and seek a revolutionary alliance with Arab peasants and workers.<sup>36</sup> This, combined with the USSR’s anti-Zionist agitation, resulted in the expulsion of Communist leaders in 1924 from the Jewish labor organization, the *Histadrut* (Organization).

Although the PCP conformed unquestionably to Soviet policy throughout its early stages, its continued establishment of grass-roots presence in the Jewish labor unions, and its growing appeal to Arab workers, forced it to develop a highly complex position that would remain consistently anti-Zionist until the dissolution of the party in 1943, when Stalin dissolved the Comintern. This crisis exposed the fissures that had developed in the party among Arab and Jewish workers. Many Jewish members had begun to view the pro-Soviet sympathies of many of the Jewish settlers and residents (*Yishuv*) as an earmark of significant political growth and argued that the Jewish community should be regarded as potential allies.<sup>37</sup> Some even went so far as to question the PCP’s stance against Jewish immigration and suggested a reversal of this policy, whereas:

Most of the PCP’s Arab members, and especially those who belonged to the younger generation of Arab intellectuals and labor activists now coming to the fore, were moving in a very different direction. They believed that the party should give priority to overcoming its weakness among Palestine’s Arab majority and transforming itself into a significant political force. As they saw it, Palestine was an Arab land and its

communist party should therefore orient itself first and foremost toward the indigenous Arab majority and its national movement.<sup>38</sup>

These tensions ruptured the movement when Jewish members of the PCP participated in May Day activities organized by the Histadrut in 1943. The Central Committee dissolved the renegade Jewish branches and expelled Jewish members who had participated. In addition, the conflict that raged between Jam'iyyat al-'Ummal al-'Arabiyya al-Filastiniyya (the Palestine Arab Workers' Society – PAWS) and the Histadrut spilled over into the PCP, and when the Histadrut unilaterally declared a strike of camp workers on May 10, in violation of an agreement of cooperation with the PAWS, the party was torn asunder over which union to support.<sup>39</sup> With the change in the Soviet Union's relationship to the world's communist parties, the ideological compromises previously made in conjunction with the CPSU dissolved and the party disintegrated into several factions. The PCP was reformed by Jewish communists, who claimed to be the legitimate inheritors of the party's legacy, but in reality it bore very little resemblance to the previous organization, both in terms of ideology and praxis. Most significantly, it was exclusively Jewish and it abandoned many traditional communist positions in order to cater to the settler community in Palestine.<sup>40</sup> However, the most prominent group to emerge out of the split, which in terms of membership bore the most resemblance to the old PCP, was the exclusively Arab 'Usbat al-Taharrur al-Watani (National Liberation League – NLL). Although the NLL, much like the new PCP, parted decisively from its communist roots, establishing instead a "progressive" nationalist program, its membership was staunchly pro-Soviet and the group continued to drift toward total alignment with the CPSU. But when the USSR reversed its position and endorsed partition in 1947, the NLL was once again divided between allegiance to Moscow and support for its own domestic national movement, which led to the rapid demise of the organization.<sup>41</sup>

The pattern of change and disintegration in the PCP up until 1948 displays the way that Soviet policy affected the development of the party and its offshoots. It also exhibits how the Soviet Union's compromise of its own communist platform, and the process of centralization of the world communist movement, coincided with the platforms maintained by the most dominant sympathetic organizations. This seems to indicate that, by 1943, the CPSU had managed to secure a near-complete hegemony over the communist movement in the Arab world and the local parties were largely incapable of developing their own platform without a major upheaval from within. This dependent relationship would continue to plague the entire movement until the collapse of the Soviet Union. The position of the USSR on the partition of Palestine in 1947 remained a major stumbling block to Arab communists. By and large, they chose to ignore the scenario altogether or, like the Iraqi Communist Party's Central

Leadership (ICP-CL) in a statement on Palestine in 1968,<sup>42</sup> they attempted to excuse it as a lapse in domestic leadership, careful not to attack the USSR. Nevertheless, the ICP-CL did reverse its position two years later, openly criticizing the Soviet Union, while the official party continued its position of dependence upon the CPSU. Again, this reinforces the argument that to depart from Soviet policy required a breach in party discipline and the formation of a dissident organization.

### **The Algerian problem**

The principal doctrine of the Algerian communists was the integration of Algerian Muslims into French political life and the betterment of conditions for Muslims in Algeria. Until the outbreak of the Algerian revolution in 1954, Algerian communists thought there was no other path left for that country than the route of assimilation – of fusion of the native element with French society. However, they were rudely taken by surprise with the outbreak of armed resistance in 1954. Then, and only then, did they discover that they had lost contact with the very people who had rallied in support of the Algerian revolution.

From that day on, the aim of the Central Committee of the Algerian Communist Party was to keep a finger in the revolutionary pie. Having failed to persuade the Front de Liberation Nationale to agree to the formation of a resistance committee similar to the Resistance Council, which had directed the underground movement in France in World War II, they tried to establish their own guerrilla zones, although with very little success.<sup>43</sup> Lerbi Bouhali, Secretary General of the Algerian Communist Party, later conceded that, in failing to throw itself into the armed struggle at the outbreak of the rebellion, his party pursued a mistaken course.<sup>44</sup>

### **The Arab communist parties and Nasserism**

The 1952 revolution, once successfully established in Egypt, could not be confined within the borders of that state. Nasser never believed in “Egyptian nationalism,” or for that matter, in any narrowly understood notion of state-based nationalism. As a revolutionary Arab nationalist, he could not accept foreign actions that were intended to fragment the potential unity of a singular “Arab nation.” Indeed, for Nasser, the validity of his revolutionary theory was to be established precisely by its extension to the other Arab countries.

This historic turning point took place on February 22, 1958, when the union between Egypt and Syria took place. On that day, the people of both countries embarked on a pioneering revolutionary experience in all fields amid extremely adverse circumstances. While it was hoped that all Arab revolutionary forces would embrace the newly formed United Arab Republic (UAR), the Communist Party of Syria opposed the union in order

to preserve its own identity and political existence. Nasser's hostility toward Arab communists placed them in a difficult position, primarily because the UAR pursued land reform and other policies advocated for so long by the communists, while at the same time banning the communist party along with other opposition. Indeed, Nasser saw little use for the communists in Egypt or anywhere else in the Middle East and consistently opposed them.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, Khalid Bakdash, the only major personality among Arab communist leaders, proceeded to take his complaints about Nasser to Peking (Beijing) once the USSR had accepted the situation (with resignation), and recognized the new UAR.<sup>46</sup> Other Arab communist parties followed Bakdash's example until the Soviet Union, in the mid-1960s, substantially revised its stance and recognition of the UAR.

However, able to ignore the communists after having solidified bases of support among Egyptian and Syrian workers and peasants, the Nasserites continued to mobilize for what they considered to be the much-needed unity against the reactionary regime in Iraq. Indeed, once the July 14, 1958 Kassim army coup in Iraq took place and succeeded in rallying the support of the masses, it was thought inevitable that the revolutionary regime would move into close collaboration with the newly formed UAR and President Nasser would "break the deadlock that imperialism had established between Iraq and the Arab national movement." The Iraqi communists instead linked their plan with the overall Arab communist plan – namely, the transformation of Iraq into a countervailing force to the United Arab Republic, thus adopting (for admittedly different compulsions) a line to which the sectarian Arab right and its Western sponsors sought to give currency – namely, that there was a "historical contradiction between Cairo and Baghdad" which was perpetual. In this way, the communists sought to place a brake upon any serious efforts to achieve Arab unity. The communist strategy was to isolate Iraq from the main current of Arab nationalism – a current manifested by the formation of the UAR – which the Arab communists justifiably saw as non-democratic.

The communists' efforts in Syria were no more successful. Their opposition to Nasser and the UAR led them to join forces with the capitalist and feudal elements to further the withdrawal of Syria from the UAR in September, 1961. It is true that they would have achieved more freedom to act under the separatist regime that succeeded the union, but it is equally true that the masses who were the beneficiaries of the socialist legislation and land reforms that Nasser had introduced, turned away from the communists and, soon after, in 1963, they became the target of the brutal Ba'athist regime.

### **The dilemma of Arab communism in retrospect**

The more than seven decades-long history of the Arab communist movement may be seen as an example of unfulfilled political opportunities, and

an important, even though indirect and unintended, contribution to the political development and maturation of the region. Although the 1917 October revolution in Russia initially made much less impact on Arab society than on other Third World peoples,<sup>47</sup> and there had never been any enthusiasm for a Bolshevik Russia, compared with popular Arab admiration of Sun-Yat-Sen<sup>48</sup> and many other nationalist leaders, the advent of Leninist communism was undoubtedly welcomed with keen interest and sympathy. Lenin's appeal for the unity of the proletarian revolution in Russia with the nationalist revolutions of the East found a considerable number of sympathetic ears. Even the prominent conservative Islamic reformer, Sheikh Mohammed Rashid Ridha, sounded not too different from Sultan Galiev and the Muslim Bolsheviks of the former Tsarist empire.<sup>49</sup> The newly founded Arab communist parties also had much more advanced and sophisticated theoretical and organizational infrastructures at their disposal than their rivals, and the general worldwide political situation, both after World War I, and even more after World War II, seemed to favor their expansion and indicate a leading role in the future.

However, the communist movement, rather than flourishing in the Arab world, barely survived. Despite the establishment of a quasi-Marxist regime in South Yemen, and, at one time or another, the participation of a small number of communists in the cabinets of Jordan (1956–1957), Syria (1971–present), Iraq (1959–1960 and 1972–1978), and Sudan (1969–1970), no Arab communist party ever gained sufficient political power to put its program into effect. It must also be pointed out that, although the National Liberation Front of South Yemen (later the Yemeni Socialist Party) embraced “scientific socialism” in 1969, it neither evolved into, nor claimed to be, a communist party. Instead, the roots of its ideology lay in the Arab nationalist movement and the Arab leftism of the 1960s. As a hybrid, distinct from the strands of Arab communism, it has been excluded from analysis here.<sup>50</sup>

The principal external obstacle to communist expansion lay in the conspiratorial manner in which communists were forced to operate, especially during the period of the Cold War, which distorted their political maturation and, to some extent, forced their dependence on the Soviet Union. In the context of the Cold War, communist parties were often driven underground by both conservative and nationalist regimes, predicating them toward cabal-like organizational structures. The underground experience, along with secretive manner in which the communists were often organized, was not conducive toward intellectual development or grass-roots participation. This denied both the relevance and the viability of the communist model of social change, and the ability of Arab communists to act autonomously in seeking to achieve fundamental social change within these societies and states.

Yet, in spite of such opposition, almost always in the forms of violence and oppression at the hands of state security apparatuses, the communist



movement in the Arab world was a significant political force for much of the twentieth century through mobilizing, first, populist movements, and then the industrial working class; organizing them as political actors, especially by articulating political policies favorable to the social change driving the anti-colonial era. With such actions, communist parties were thrust into the political debate of newly independent Arab countries and thereby became influential. Thus, the communists may be credited with bringing the public into the political process, and for providing a sophisticated critique of colonialism, social inequality, and development policies within the Arab world. While never gaining formal power at the state level, the movement nonetheless influenced political and social change, most clearly throughout the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, as it became more of a social conscience than a revolutionary movement.

The saga of the Arab communist movement is now at a crucial cross-roads. The shock of Gorbachev's ideological capitulation and the collapse of the Soviet Union in December, 1991, brought into question the communist movement all over the world, and contributed decisively to its sharp decline and near-complete political downfall. In the Arab world, the communist parties represented only a small minority. They have never had a strong social basis among the working class and/or even the revolutionary peasantry. Instead, their members were drawn mainly from the professional intelligentsia, and the various groups of the urban petit bourgeoisie. Ideologically, they were largely alienated from the predominantly religious and/or nationalistic Arab masses. Their influence – especially in the 1950s and 1960s – was predominantly based on international developments such as the struggle against Western – primarily American – hegemony in the region, and the Palestinian resistance against Israeli encroachment. In both those cases the Soviet Union, even though to varying levels, and not without hesitation, nevertheless supported the Arab nations over the long term. Largely because of the Soviet organizational and financial support and training, the local communist parties, particularly in 1930s and 1940s, were much better organized and more efficient than other indigenous Arab political parties. Some strategic success was achieved due to their organizational structures and relative ideological sophistication that influenced local politics, providing ready-made patterns to follow for the other Arab political forces. This initial advantage proved to be only temporary. In the 1960s and 1970s, their overdeveloped bureaucratic apparatuses and lack of internal democracy led to the ossification of the parties and their subsequent political fragmentation. As early as 1964, Elias Murqos concluded that the failure of Arab communist parties lay in their lack of self-criticism,<sup>51</sup> provincialism,<sup>52</sup> the separation between the national democratic revolutions experienced in the region on the one hand, and their commitment to a socialist revolution on the other,<sup>53</sup> their dependence on ready-made tactics imported from a different historical and cultural experience,<sup>54</sup> and the concomitant utilization of a "Stalinist ideology."<sup>55</sup> Unable

or unwilling to follow Lenin's injunction to "take cognizance of real life, of the true facts of reality" and not to "cling to a theory of yesterday, which like all theories, at best only outlines the main and the general, and only comes near to embracing life in all of its complexity,"<sup>56</sup> Arab communists rarely provided any sustained creative analysis of the peculiar complexities of the Arab world and the challenges posed by imperialism and social exploitation in the Middle East.

Their long-lasting adherence to Moscow, opportunistic approaches to political situations, adoption of ready-made tactics, and persistent lack of self-criticism prevented them from making the genuine intellectual advance in their ideological and organizational structures. Authoritarian leadership and rigid power structures based upon personality cult legitimization and non-participatory policy-making were common, leading Ilyas Murqus, the distinguished ex-communist historian, to label them "Arab Stalinists" as early as 1964.<sup>57</sup> Among the Arab communist parties, only in the LCP was a Secretary General ever elected or replaced through peaceful means. On the other hand, Yusuf Salman (Fahd) was Secretary General of the ICP from its formation in 1934 until his execution in 1949, whereupon Salam 'Adel became Secretary General from 1955 until 1963, when he too was executed. 'Adel was followed by 'Aziz Muhammad, who held the post from 1964 until the party's breakdown in 1995, when he delivered the post to one of his most trusted disciples. Khalid Bakdash was Secretary General of the Syrian Communist Party from 1928 until his death in 1995, when his wife inherited his position; Nikola Shawi was Secretary General of the LCP from 1947 to 1973, when he was forced out by pressures for change emanating from within the party. Even 'Abdul Khaliq Mahjub, the popular Sudanese Communist Party Secretary General, held the post from the party's inception in 1948 to his execution in 1971. His successor, Mohammed Ibrahim Nugud has held the post from that point to the present.

Furthermore, none of the parties has had biannual congresses as their constitutions require. Such organizational rigidity encouraged the formation of major splits within the various parties, further weakening their social strength and ideological appeal. Indeed, democratization was the main reason the majority of the Arab communists so enthusiastically welcomed Gorbachev's reforms, which seemed to provide them with the hope for getting out of their organizational stagnation. Ironically, this prevalent phenomenon fostered new interpretations of Marxism and resulted in challenges and eventual divisions, and even the creation of competing structures and variations that insisted they represented true Marxism.

These splinter groups then competed for international and Soviet communist recognition, as occurred in the creation of the Iraqi Communist Party – Central Command in 1967, and the Syrian Communist Party (SCP) – Politburo Group in 1973 under the leadership of Riyadh al-Turk. Later, in 1985, another group from within the SCP broke away under the leadership of Bakdash's second in command, Yousuf Faisal, though

keeping the same party name. The Syrian regime recognized both factions, dividing party representation equally under the regime's political umbrella, the "Progressive National Front."<sup>58</sup> In the LCP, the same crisis manifested itself from 1964, leading even to a questioning of the tenets of communism and the birth of the radical group, *Ila al-Amam* (Forward), and the Party of the Socialist Revolution (*Hizb al-Thawrah al-Ishtirakiyah*), after 1967. This turmoil further manifested itself in the official third party congress of 1972 in Lebanon when the concerns of the dissidents were incorporated into the congress's deliberations and final resolution.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, the same process took place in the Sudanese Communist Party following Nimeiri's takeover, until the execution of the party's Secretary General, Abdul Khaliq Mahjub, in 1971.

Arab communist aspirations were disappointed when Gorbachev's "New Thinking" replaced traditional Soviet support for Arab causes with a new cooperation with the United States and Israel. A short time later, both the USSR and its powerful Communist Party (CPSU) completely disappeared from international politics, with their successors initiating completely new, and by no means pro-Arab, policies toward the region.<sup>60</sup> The new Russian state created after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December, 1991 was not a simple continuation of its legal Soviet predecessor, nor of the former Russian Empire, which had collapsed during World War II in 1917. As Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, recently pointed out, "Neither its current political system, nor its outer frontiers and immediate geopolitical surroundings, have a precedent in Russian history. By all indications, the Russian Federation is a new state functioning in a radically changing system of international relations."<sup>61</sup> Consequently, Russia's relations with Arab countries are being altered by a changed ideological framework, as well as substantially different political and economic interests. The Arab communists, or what needs to be more properly called their remnants, have thus been left without any external support and guidance, and accordingly have to rely solely on their own local roots and resources.

In order to survive as a political movement they have had to adapt to the changes and respond to the challenges of the new era. Various Arab communist parties, and even various splinter groups among them, have responded in multifarious manners to the problems facing them. Overall one can conclude that two new tendencies have become predominant: Arab communist parties have become both more pro-nationalist and more pro-liberal.<sup>62</sup> The majority of Arab communists have also now become supporters of political (liberal) democracy and individual freedoms, and, in order to develop their countries, have accepted the market economy in the form of "productive capitalism."<sup>63</sup> Their most challenging problems are their relations with Islamists, and with political and religious fundamentalist movements. In many cases those movements have taken away from them the communists' previous social base of support, and included in their programs many former communist goals such as the anti-Western

and anti-Israeli struggles, a state-run economy, and egalitarian social justice. However, Arab communists differ dramatically from these groups on issues of political democracy and the secular versus strictly religious ideological principles. At present, though some parties, such as the Algerian and the Sudanese Communist Parties, strongly oppose the Islamists, others, such as the Palestinian and Iraqi communists, have made strategic alliances with them against common enemies.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century Arab communists are engaged in a desperate struggle for an identity and for political survival. Their membership is very small and their social influence, which has never been strong, is now quite limited. According to leaders of the communist movement in the semi-independent Iraqi Kurdistan, where the communists enjoy a full range of political freedoms, they win no more than 4–5 percent of the popular vote.<sup>64</sup> Their influence in the other parts of the region is even smaller. Following the conclusion of the Cold War, the “Red Danger” in the Arab World is no longer perceived as a genuine threat by any serious observer. The fact that Arab communists have found themselves alienated from the Arab masses, and largely peripheral to the progressive movement in the region, is a logical and inevitable outcome of all previous developments. The prospect of their renaissance is hinged intrinsically on their ability to rescue the theoretical tenets of communist social organization from the dogma of the Soviet era.

However, though defeated and compromised, Arab communists should nevertheless not be ignored nor easily forgotten. Their movement probably never had any real chance of success in the region, which, in addition to its lack of a capitalist infrastructure, was deeply traditional and religious. The activities of the Arab communists, and their often heroic struggle, featuring immense personal sacrifices, have not been without significant impact. In spite of their failures, it is important not to underestimate the indirect contribution of Arab communism to the social, political, and economic development of the region. Political parties across the ideological spectrum in the region have used Leninism, as a political and organizational strategy, often to considerable effect. The Arab communists also played a significant role in pointing out the potential function of the Soviet Union as an ally against Western imperialism, and, hence, paved the way for Arab neutralism and non-alignment. Like no other political force in the Arab world, they linked the Arab nations with what amounted to the most prominent political struggle of the twentieth century, thereby giving the Arab communist parties significant political advantages and successes. In 1991, one of the leaders of the Sudanese Communist Party admitted: “in the 20th century, Arabs suffered two major defeats: the loss of Palestine and the collapse of the Soviet Union.”<sup>65</sup> The Arab trade union movement also owes much to the early communist organizers, and in many countries it was communist-led campaigns that led to the first progressive labor legislation.

According to the contemporary Russian scholar, G.G. Kosach, the founders and leaders of the communist movement in the Arab world "were neither heroes, nor agents of the Soviet State. They were first of all ordinary people with all of the virtues and vices common to human beings."<sup>66</sup> Kosach asserts that, most frequently, Arab communists emerged from those parts of the Arab national movement that most sharply reacted to the humiliations and oppressions suffered within their individual countries. They aspired to achieve radical change in the lives of their fellow people, especially those most oppressed by the systems of colonialism and its successors, by embracing Lenin's doctrine and the Soviet cause, which at that time seemed to many to provide a source of guidance toward a better future.<sup>67</sup> In other words, the Arab communists were by and large Arab liberationists who found empowerment in the message of Leninism and attempted to transform Soviet-style socialism into real policy and action that could ameliorate oppressions in their immediate environment.

Perhaps most importantly, though, the Arab communist movement has had a fundamental impact on the political discourse of the Arab world. The non-communist Arab left, represented by Nasserism, the Ba'ath to some extent, the Arab nationalist movement, the FLN of Algeria, and the Palestinian resistance movement, have all borrowed conceptually and organizationally from the communist movement, or have been forced to formulate their own responses to issues which the communists have raised. The same might also be said of other groups elsewhere on the ideological spectrum. The Hegelian "irony of history," which was often quoted by Marx, may be seen in the fact that probably the most prominent communist legacy in the Arab world was the provision of their political rivals with more adequate and sophisticated ideological and organizational tools for the future. Such a situation, however, was also the ultimate testimony to their theoretical and practical weakness. The growth and strength of the Arab left indicates the existence of a broad and deep constituency in need of a progressive analysis for action which the Arab communist parties consistently failed to provide.

As illustrated by the Russian scholars, G. Kosach and H. Melkumian, the Arab Communist parties, although always small in number, nonetheless tended to include in their rank and file some of the brightest and most promising representatives of the Arab intelligentsia. Because of this fact, they maintained the potential to influence the socio-political and socio-economic development of their respective countries.<sup>68</sup> Although the collapse of the Soviet Union brought hardships upon the communist movement, especially in terms of logistical support and international credibility, the departure of the Soviet regime also provided the greatest opportunity for an emancipation of the communist movement. Arab communists, liberated from Soviet control and ossified dogmatism, have been confronted with the challenge of developing a new strategy to contribute to the future of the Arab world. If the failure of Soviet bureaucracy and dictatorship can

be observed as an important lesson for communists and socialists of today, then the movement may be able to rejuvenate its influence and rehabilitate its relevance in the Arab milieu. The ideological and organizational forms of political movement(s) must, of necessity, correspond to the beliefs, interests, and overall culture of the society in which they function if they are to succeed. The Arab communists failed largely because they were apparently unable or unwilling to pay the price of adaptation, which has always been a prerequisite for success. On the other hand, the history of Arab communism reveals that, under the conditions of social injustice, foreign dependency, and external threat, there will always be fertile soil for a radical ideology, and that a movement, such as the Arab communist movement, under a leadership that is able and willing to adapt to the local social environment, has the potential to resurface in the future and bring forth more relevant and sophisticated analyses of national, regional, and international issues/politics.

The communist movement in the Arab world is now faced with the realities of a modern imperialism and capitalism that has spread worldwide, as well as the international forces that have emerged to challenge and resist this form of globalization. If the Arab communists are to play a significant role in challenging and resisting modern capitalism and imperialism locally, they must link up internationally and bring forth their domestic knowledge and experience to the international forum. They may help to create a movement capable of gathering popular support and genuinely challenging the existing distribution of wealth and power. How communists manage to apply their revolutionary praxis in bringing local concerns to the contemporary global resistance movement, and vice versa, will determine the outcome and the future relevance of the communist movement not only in the Arab world, but also in the world as a whole.

## Appendix 1

# “A Manifesto to the Peoples of the East”\*

### PEOPLES OF THE EAST

Six years ago, there broke out in Europe a colossal and monstrous carnage, a world war in which 35,000,000 human lives were lost, hundreds of major cities and thousands of villages destroyed, European countries devastated, and all the peoples were subjected to the torment of unheard-of poverty and unprecedented starvation.

Up to the present time, this colossal war has been waged in Europe, only partially affecting Asia and Africa.

This war was waged by the European peoples and the peoples of the East took a relatively small part in it: only the forces of hundreds of thousands of Turkish peasants who were deceived by their rulers and led by German capitalists, and from two to three million Indians and Negroes – slaves, bought by English and French capitalists and, as slaves, hurled to death on the far-distant, foreign battlefields of France, in defence of the foreign, and to them, unintelligible interests of English and French bankers and industrialists.

Although the peoples of the East remained aloof from this gigantic war, although they took only a insignificant part in it, nevertheless, this carnage was waged, not for the countries of Europe, not for the countries and peoples of the West, but for the countries and peoples of the East.

It was waged for the partition of the entire world, and mainly for the partition of Asia, for the partition of the East. It was waged in order to determine who will control the Asiatic countries, whose slaves the peoples of the East will be.

It was waged in order to determine precisely who, the English or the German capitalists, will skin the Turkish, Persian, Egyptian, and Indian peasants and workers.

The monstrous four years of carnage ended in a victory for England and France. The German capitalists were crushed, and along with them the entire German people were likewise crushed, destroyed, and doomed to

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death by starvation. Victorious France, where the war almost wiped out the entire adult population and destroyed all the industrialized areas, bled in the struggle and after the victory remained completely powerless. And as a result of the colossal, barbaric carnage, imperialist England emerged the sole and all-powerful master of Europe and Asia. She, alone, in all Europe was still able to muster sufficient strength, for she waged the war with foreign hands, with the hands of the peoples she had enslaved, Indians and Negroes, and at the expense of her oppressed colonies.

Having emerged the victor and the complete ruler and master of half the world, the English government began to carry out the objectives for which the war was waged: it began to consolidate its hold on all the Asiatic countries and to bring about the complete enslavement of all the peoples of the East.

With none to interfere and fearing no one, the junta of greedy bankers and capitalists at the head of the English government quite openly and brazenly put aside all shame and began to reduce to slavery the peasants and workers of the countries of the East.

Peoples of the East! You know what England has done in India; you know how she transformed the multimillion masses of Indian peasants and workers into unprivileged and dumb driven beasts.

The Indian peasant is obliged to give up to the English government so much of his crop that the remainder does not suffice him even for a few months. The Indian worker must work in the factory of the English capitalist for such a pittance that he cannot buy with it the handful of rice necessary for his daily subsistence. Millions of Indians die from starvation annually. Every year millions of Indians perish in the swamps and jungles from hard labor, undertaken by the English capitalists for their own enrichment.

Millions of Indians, having failed to obtain their daily bread in their own very rich and fertile native land, are forced to enter the English army and go away, in order to eke out for the rest of their lives a difficult soldier's existence and to wage endless wars in all corners of the world with all the peoples of the world, establishing everywhere ruthless English domination. Buying with their lives and blood an unending increase in wealth for the English capitalists, insuring them huge profits, luxury, and prosperity, the Indians themselves do not enjoy any human rights; the powers that be – the English officers, insolent sons of the English bourgeoisie which grew fat on Indian corpses – do not recognize them as people.

The Indian does not dare to sit at the same table with an Englishman, use the same quarters, travel in the same coach, study in the same school. In the eyes of the English bourgeois, every Indian is a pariah, a slave, a beast of burden, who does not dare to experience any human feelings, does not dare to make any demands. To each uprising brought about by the



extremities of the Indian peasants and workers, the English retaliate with ruthless mass shootings. The streets of those Indian villages which revolted are covered with hundreds of corpses and those who remain alive are compelled by the English officers for their own amusement to crawl on their bellies and to lick the boots of their enslavers.

Peoples of the East! You know what England has done to Turkey? England has offered Turkey a peace by which three-fourths of Asia Minor, inhabited exclusively by Ottomans, including all the industrial cities, has gone to France, England, Italy, and Greece; and on the remainder of the Turkish land they have levied such taxes that the Ottomans have become perpetually insolvent, and have to pay tribute forever to England.

When the Turkish people refused to accept such a disastrous peace, the English occupied Istanbul, sacred to the Muslims, drove out the Turkish Parliament, arrested all the people's leaders, shot the best of them, and exiled hundreds of others to the island of Malta, where they were imprisoned in the dark and damp dungeon of an old fortress. Now the English reign in Constantinople. From the Turks they have taken everything that it was possible to take. They have taken money, banks, factories and foundries, railroads and ships, and have cut off all access to Asia Minor. There is not a piece of material, not a piece of metal in Turkey. The Turkish peasant is forced to go without a shirt and he must plough the land with a wooden plough.

The English, with the aid of the Greek army, occupied the vilayet of Smyrna; with the aid of the French, Adana; and with the colonials, Bursa and Izmit. They have besieged the Turks on every side and are moving steadily into the interior of the country, attempting to bring about the complete exhaustion of the Turkish people, who, even aside from that, have been tormented and devastated by ten uninterrupted wars. And in Turkish areas already occupied by the English, the latter, true to their custom, scoff and jeer intolerably at the Turkish people. In Constantinople they occupied all the schools and universities for their own barracks, they forbade Turkish education, closed up Turkish newspapers, destroyed workers' organizations, filled the jails with Turkish patriots, and handed over the entire population to the uncontrolled jurisdiction of the English police, which regards itself as having the right, without any pretext, and in broad daylight in the streets of Constantinople to club over the head people wearing a fez. To the English bourgeois, one who wears a fez, one who is a Turk, is a creature of the lowest species, a pariah, a slave, who can be treated as a dog.

In Turkish occupied localities, the English indeed treat the Turks like dogs, sending them to forced labor, and punishing them by beating them up with a stick. By every ruse, baseness, and compulsion they strive to transform Turkey into a conquered country and to compel the Turkish people's masses to work for their enrichment.

Peoples of the East! What has England done to Persia? Having suppressed the peasant uprising against the Shah and the landowners, having shot and hanged thousands upon thousands of Persian peasants, the English capitalists have again restored the power of the Shah and the landowners who had been overthrown by the people, they have deprived the peasants of the landowners' lands which they had seized, and have again reduced them to the status of slaves, have again reduced them to *rayalis* and unprivileged slaves of the *mulkadars*.

And then, having bribed the Shah's corrupt government, the English capitalists, by means of a base and treacherous treaty, obtained complete ownership of all Persia, with the entire Persian people. They have seized all Persian wealth, stationed in all Persian cities garrisons composed of deceived Indians and Sepoys, bought into slavery, and they have begun to run Persia as a conquered country, treating the independent (in name) Persian people as a people reduced to serfdom.

Peoples of the East! What has England done to Mesopotamia and Arabia? Without any ado, she declared these independent Muslim countries to be her own colonies, drove from the land the former owners, the Arabs, deprived them of the best fertile valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates, deprived them of the best pastures indispensable to subsistence, took away the richest oil resources of Mosul and Basra, and thus depriving the Arabs of all means of subsistence, counted on starvation to make them her slaves.

What has England done to Palestine, where, at first, to please the Anglo-Jewish capitalists, she drove the Arabs from their lands in order to transfer these lands to the Jewish settlers, and then in order to provide an outlet for the discontent of the Arabs, she turned them against the very Jewish settlements she had established, sowing discord, hostility, and resentment among the various tribes, weakening both sides, in order to rule and govern herself?

What has England done to Egypt, where the entire native population already for the eighth decade is sighing under the heavy yoke of the English capitalists, a yoke even heavier and more ruinous for the people than the past yoke of the Egyptian pharaohs, who with the labor of their slaves built the huge pyramids?

What has England done to China? This enormous country she, together with her partner, imperialistic Japan, transformed into her own colony, exploiting and poisoning with opium the 300,000,000 people; and with the aid of her own and Japanese forces, she suppresses with unheard-of atrocities the revolutionary ferment which is beginning. By restoring the old despots overthrown by the people, she tries with all her strength to hold the multimillion people under the yoke of despotism, oppression, and poverty, in order to exploit them more successfully.

What has England done to Korea, to this flourishing country with its thousand years of culture? She handed her over to be devoured by Japanese

capitalists, who now by fire and sword subjugate the Korean people to English and Japanese capital.

What has England done to Afghanistan where, by bribing the Emir's government, she holds the people in oppression, poverty, and ignorance, trying to make this country into something resembling a desert, and by means of this desert to fence in India, which she has oppressed, from any contact with the outside world?

What is England doing in Armenia and Georgia where, with her gold, she holds the masses of peasants and workers under the yoke of the hated and corrupt Dashnak and Menshevik governments which terrorize and oppress their own peoples and drive them to fight against the peoples of Azerbaijan and Russia, liberated from the yoke of the bourgeoisie?

Even into Turkestan, Khiva, Bokhara, Azerbaijan, Daghestan, and the Northern Caucasus, English imperialism penetrates; its agents poke their noses into everything, distribute with a generous hand English gold obtained with the blood and sweat of oppressed peoples, and everywhere they try to support tyrants and despots, khans and landlords, to fight the budding revolutionary movement, and to hold at any cost all the peoples in oppression, ruin, poverty, and ignorance.

The oppression and ruin, poverty and ignorance of the peoples of the East serve as sources of enrichment for imperialist England.

Peoples of the East! To you belong the richest, the most fertile, the most extensive lands of the entire world; these lands, once the cradle of all mankind, could feed not only their own inhabitants, but also the population of the whole world; nevertheless, every year 10,000,000 Turkish and Persian peasants and workers now find for themselves neither a crust of bread nor employment on their own most fertile and spacious lands, and are compelled to leave their native land and to seek subsistence in foreign countries.

They are forced to do that because in their native land everything – lands, money, banks, factories, and shops – all these are in the hands of the English capitalists. They are compelled to do that because in their native country they are not the masters and do not dare to give any orders; on the contrary, the foreigners – the English capitalists – give them orders. Such was the situation formerly, such it was prior to the war, when imperialist England still had rivals in the rapacious German, French, and Russian imperialists, when she did not yet dare to clasp her paws on all the countries of the East, fearing that she might receive a blow on her extended paws from some rapacious rival.

But now, when imperialist England has crushed and weakened all her rivals, when she has become the complete master of Europe and Asia, now her ruling capitalists will give way to all their wolfish appetites and without restraint, without shame, will sink their rapacious fangs and claws into the bleeding body of the peoples of the East.

English capital is cramped in Europe, it has grown, it lacks opportunity, and European workers, enlightened by revolutionary consciousness, likewise become bad slaves; already they refuse to work for nothing, they demand good wages, good food. In order that capital may have elbow room, may produce a good profit, and may be able to throw a sop to the European workers to impede the growth of their revolutionary mood, in order that it may be able to bribe the top leaders of the working masses, English capital needs new lands and new workers – unprivileged and unenfranchised slaves.

And English capitalists have found these new lands in the Eastern countries, and the unprivileged and unenfranchised slave workers among the peoples of the East.

The English capitalists are trying to seize Turkey and Persia, Mesopotamia and Arabia, Afghanistan and Egypt, in order to take away the land from the peasants in these countries, by buying for a mere trifle all the plots of those who are ruined and deeply in debt; out of these plots they purchased they intend to create huge estates and plantations, and to drive the landless Eastern peasants onto them as farm hands and slaves. In Turkey, Persia, and Mesopotamia they want, by means of cheap labor, with the unpaid hands of the hungry Turkish, Persian, and Arab poor, to construct factories and foundries, to build railroads, and to work the mines. They want, by means of cheap production of factory products, to destroy native trades and millions of local craftsmen with whom the cities of the East are teeming, to throw them into the street, depriving them of work. By establishing huge firms, they want to ruin the small local merchants and to throw them likewise into the street, into the ranks of the proletariat who sell only their labor.

The English capitalists want to proletarianize in toto all the peoples of the East, to ruin the economy of all the peasants, of all the craftsmen, of all the merchants, and to drive them onto their plantations and into their factories, foundries, and mines, as starving slave laborers. Thereafter, by back-bending labor, by starvation wages, they want to squeeze from these enslaved Eastern peoples both sweat and blood. And to turn this labor sweat, this peasant blood, into increased value, into profit, into pure gold, into hard cash.

This is the kind of future imperialist England has in store for the peoples of the East!

England, with a population of barely forty millions, of which only one-fortieth constitutes a group of oppressors and exploiters, and the remaining 39 million belong to the oppressed and exploited workers and peasants, wants to dominate half the world, wants to hold in serfdom 800 million toilers living in the East. One English bourgeois capitalist, who already compels 39 English workers to work for him, likewise wants to force 2,000 more workers and peasants from Persia, Turkey, Mesopotamia, India, and Egypt to work for him. Two thousand and forty hungry and tortured people

who enjoy none of the blessings of life, must toil all their lives for one doing nothing parasite – an English capitalist. One million such parasites and exploiters, English bankers and industrialists, want to reduce to serfdom 800 million proletarians of the East! And it should be said that they know how to achieve their goal, they have neither shame, conscience, nor fear, they have nothing but savage greed and unlimited thirst for gain. Ruin, hunger, blood, torment, the sighs of 800 million people, mean nothing to them. All that counts is profit, all that counts is gain.

And, in pursuit of this profit and gain, the English imperialists have a tenacious grip on the throat of the peoples of the East, and prepare for them a dark future: complete ruin, eternal slavery, no rights, oppression, and unlimited exploitation. That is what is in store for the peoples of the East, if the present English government retains its power, if imperialist England retains its strength and consolidates its domination over the countries of the East. A pitiful handful of English bankers will devour hundreds of millions of peasants and workers of the East.

*But this shall not happen!*

Before the English capitalists, the rulers of imperialist England, rises the organized might of the peasants and workers of the peoples of the East, united under the red banner of the Communist International, under the red banner of the union of revolutionary workers, who have set as their goal the liberation of the entire world, of all mankind from any exploitation and any oppression.

The first Congress of the Peoples of the East throughout the whole world loudly proclaims to the capitalists who rule England: – This shall not happen!

You dogs shall not devour the peoples of the East, your pitiful handful of oppressors shall not reduce to eternal serfdom hundreds of millions of Eastern peasants and workers! You have grabbed too big a slice, you have bitten off more than you can chew, and it will choke you.

The peoples of the East have long stagnated in darkness and ignorance under the despotic yoke of their own rulers and tyrants, under the yoke of foreign conquerors and capitalists. But the roar of the world carnage, the thunder of the Russian workers' revolution, which has cast off from the eastern Russian people the century-old chains of capitalist serfdom, has awakened them, and now, aroused from the sleep of many centuries, they are rising.

They wake up and hear a call to a holy war, to a “*gazovat*.” This is our call!

This is the appeal of the first Congress of the Representatives of the Peoples of the East, united with the revolutionary proletariat of the West under the banner of the Communist International.

It is we – the representatives of the toiling masses of all the peoples of the East – India, Turkey, Persia, Egypt, Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Kashgar, China, Indo-China, Japan, Korea, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Daghestan, North Caucasus, Arabia, Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine, Khiva, Bokhara, Turkestan, Fergan, Tamaria, Bashkiria, Kirghizia, etc., united in an unbreakable union among ourselves and with the revolutionary workers of the West – we summon our peoples to a holy war.

We say:

Peoples of the East! Many times you have heard from your governments the summons to a holy war, you marched under the green banner of the Prophet; but all these holy wars were deceitful and false, and served the interests of your selfish rulers; but you, peasants and workers, even after these wars remained in serfdom and destitution; you won the blessings of life for others, but you yourselves never enjoyed any of them.

Now we summon you to the first genuine holy war under the red banner of the Communist International.

We summon you to a holy war for your own welfare, for your freedom, for your life.

England, the last mighty imperialist robber remaining in Europe, spreads over the Muslim countries of the East her black wings, trying to reduce the peoples of the East to her slaves and her prey.

Slavery, appalling slavery, ruination, oppression, and exploitation, she brings to the peoples of the East. Save yourselves, then, peoples of the East!

Rise, then, for the struggle against this plunderer!

Rise, all of you, as one man, for a *holy war* against the English conquerors!

Arise, Indian, exhausted by starvation and heavy slave labor!

Arise, Anatolian peasant, crushed by taxes and usurers!

Arise, Persian *rayah*, choked by the *mulkadar*!

Arise Armenian toiler, driven into the barren mountains!

Arise, Arabs and Afghans, lost in the sandy deserts and cut off by the English from the entire world!

Arise, all of you, for the struggle against the common enemy – imperialist England!

High waves the red banner of the holy war . . .

This is a holy war for the liberation of the peoples of the East, so that mankind shall no longer be divided into oppressors and oppressed, for the complete equality of all peoples and tribes, irrespective of the language they speak, irrespective of the color of their skin, no matter what religion they confess!

A holy war to put an end to the division of countries into progressive and backward, dependent and independent, mother countries and colonies!

A holy war for the liberation of all mankind from the yoke of capitalist and imperialist slavery, for the elimination of any oppression of people by people and any exploitation of man by man!

A holy war against the last citadel of capitalism and imperialism in Europe, against the nest of robbers on sea and land, against the eternal oppressor of all the peoples of the East, against imperialist England!

A holy war for the freedom, independence, and happiness of all the peoples of the East, all the millions of peasants and workers enslaved by England!

Peoples of the East! In this holy war, all the revolutionary workers and all the oppressed peasants of the West will be with you. They will help you. They will fight and die with you.

It is the first Congress of the Representatives of the Peoples of the East that speaks to you.

Long live the union of all the peasants and workers of the East and the West, the union of all the toilers, of all the oppressed and exploited!

Long live its militant staff – the Communist International!

May the holy war of the Peoples of the East and the toilers of the whole world burn with unquenchable fire against imperialist England!

#### *Honorary Members of the Presidium*

Radek (Russia), Bela-Kun (Hungary), Rosmer (France), Quelch (England), Reed (America), Steinhart-Gruber (Austria), Janson (Holland), Shablin (Balkan Federation), Yoshiharo (Japan). Zinoviev, Chairman of the Congress

#### *Members of the Presidium*

Ryskulov, Abdurashidov, Karriev (Turkestan), Mustala, Subhi (Turkey), Van (China), Karid (Lidisi), Mulabekdzhan, Rakhmanov (Khiva), Mukhamedov (Bokhara), Korkmasov (Daghestan), Digurov (Terek Region), Aliev (Northern Caucasus), Kostanyan (Armenia), Narimanov (Azerbaijan), Yenikejev (Tatar Republic), Amur-Sanan (Kalmyk Republic), Makharadze (Georgia), Haidar Khan (Persia), Aga-Zade (Afghanistan), Narbutabekov (Tashkent), Makhmudov (Fergan), Takhsim-Baarri, Khaavis-Mahomed (Anatolia), Kuleyev (Transcaspia), Niyas-Kuli (Turkmenia), Kari-Tadzhi (Samarkand), Nazyr-Sedyki (India), Sidadzhedin, Kardash-Ogly (Daghestan), Yelchiev, Musayev (Azerbaijan), Azim (Afghanistan), Abdulayev (Khiva).

Ostrovsky, Secretary of the Congress<sup>1</sup>

## Appendix 2

### **“The Tasks of the Communists in the All-Arab National Movement”\***

1 One of the most important tasks of the revolutionary struggle for liberation against imperialism in the huge area of the Near East is the solution of the Arab national question. The masses of the people in all Arab countries are under the yoke of imperialism. In one form or another, to one degree or another, all the Arab countries are deprived of political independence. Palestine, Trans-Jordania, and Iraq are mandates wholly subject to the domination of English imperialism; Syria is governed by French imperialists; Egypt is under the heel of British domination, and the “independence” of that country, declared in 1921, is an insult to real independence, due to the fact that the most important, key political positions are in the hands of English imperialists; moreover, the English remain the dictators of the Sudan; Tripoli is a colony of the Italian imperialists; the French regime dominates Tunisia and Algeria, and as for Morocco, it is partitioned between French and Spanish imperialists. Yemen, Hijaz, and the Nadj, although they are not directly subjected to imperialist domination, are deprived of the prerequisites for an independent existence, and, encircled and hounded by the colonies of the imperialists, are forced to submit themselves to the dictates of imperialism.

The entire system of imperialist domination over the Arab peoples is based, not only on their outright enslavement and subjugation, but on the fact that they have been split up arbitrarily into parts at the command of world imperialism. This division of the Arab peoples among the English, French, Italian, and Spanish imperialists reflects the prevailing balance of power among these imperialists and is so adjusted as to perpetuate their domination. It is in the most crying contradiction to the vital interests of the Arab peoples. The political boundaries dividing them have been established and maintained forcibly by the imperialists, who thus carry out the principle of “divide and rule.” These boundaries artificially weaken the masses of the Arab peoples in their struggle against the foreign yoke for

\* Resolution adopted at the conference of the Communist Parties of Palestine and Syria in 1931. Published in Japanese in the journal, *Marxism* (Tokyo, March, 1928).



their political independence and national unification in accordance with the free decision of the masses of the people.

The gist of the Arab national question consists in the fact that the English, French, Italian, and Spanish imperialists have dismembered the living body of the Arab peoples, hold the Arab countries in a state of feudal fragmentation, deprive each and every one of these countries of the prerequisites for an independent economic and political development, and block the national political unification of the Arab countries.

Syria is arbitrarily broken up into five parts, each with a different government, different laws, etc. The English have seized the Sudan by force. By converting all the Arab countries into agrarian and raw material appendages to corresponding metropolises, and by distorting and hampering the development of the productive forces and their general development, imperialism thereby strives to preserve and to perpetuate their enslavement. The feudal elements thus become predominant, whereas the development of the capitalist elements, for the most part, is confined to the creation of a business bourgeoisie, which is more or less tied to the feudal land-owners, its function being to dispose of the products of the metropolis and to pump out the raw materials for the metropolis. Thus imperialism preserves the medieval feudal monarchies (Egypt, Morocco, and Tunisia), creates new semifeudal monarchies (Iraq, Transjordan), relying upon various petty "dynasties," or creates its own imperialist colonial regime without the aid of its monarchial agents (Palestine, Syria, Tripoli, Algeria), combining oppression and plunder with mandatory government in the name of the League of Nations.

2 What is general and decisive for all Arab countries is the fact that, alongside the key political positions occupied by the imperialists, foreign and financial capital holds in its hands all the decisive key economic positions. The biggest banks, factories, railroads, ports, navigation, mines, the most important irrigation systems, the key positions in foreign trade, the state debts, etc., are in the hands of foreign financial capital. Moreover, the majority of the imperialist plunderers of the Arab countries have seized the best lands (in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Tripoli, Egypt, Syria, Palestine), and the English imperialists have employed counterrevolutionary Zionism to seize and plunder the lands in Palestine. The Arab fellahin and the Bedouins<sup>1</sup> are crowded onto the poorer land and are deprived of land and pasture. Imperialism makes use of its key political and economic positions for the merciless exploitation of the Arab masses.

In oppressing and exploiting the workers, the imperialists rely on reactionary monarchial cliques, on feudal and semifeudal land-owners and sheikhs,<sup>2</sup> on native bourgeois compradores,<sup>3</sup> and on the higher clergy. What is characteristic, general, and decisive for the agrarian system of the Arab countries is that a large part of the land, livestock, and pasture, not yet seized by the foreign owners of *latifundium*, planters, banks, colonists, or the state,

are in the hands of feudal and semifeudal landowners, sheikhs, and the church. The fellahin and Bedouins are subjected to the worst forms of feudal exploitation (*khamis*,<sup>4</sup> *metayage*). Against the background of feudal exploitation of the peasantry, under conditions of the development of goods and money relations, imperialistic plunder of the land, the disintegration of the communities, the plunder of communal lands by landowners and by the imperialist colonial regime, and the crowding of the Bedouins from their pasture, usury flourishes on a grand scale. Extremely high taxes, which, in part, are still in kind (*ashar* in Syria, Palestine, etc.) constitute an additional burden on the already unbearable situation of the basic masses of the people. The various areas of the Arab countries are at different stages of economic development and class struggle. In Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, the struggle for national independence and national unification of the Arab peoples, on the basis of people's governments, inevitably is fused with the struggle for an agrarian peasant revolution, directed against the imperialist usurpers and their agents (Zionists in Palestine) and simultaneously against the local feudal landowners. In Iraq, there still prevails feudal, tribal, and patrimonial ownership, which is being subjected to seizure on the part of plantation companies of the top local feudal lords and business bourgeoisie, acting under the control of imperialism. Here the center of gravity of the agrarian movement lies in the mobilization of the masses of the people for the struggle against the usurpers, against the background of the struggle with imperialism and its immediate assistants. To a still higher degree this applies to such countries as Tripoli and Morocco, where the basic mass of the population is still chained to the nomadic mode of life and to the feudal patrimonial system, and where the urban centers cannot extend their revolutionary influence. In northern Algeria there exists, more or less, an established colonial domination, with cruel exploitation of the local sedentary population and a relatively important development of the cities and capitalist relations. In southern Algeria, there are still nomadic tribes, not yet subdued by the French imperialists. Under a backward social economic order, the peasants often begin to constitute an independent force only during the process of the disintegration of semiprimitive communities and patrimonies. An exact account of all the specific variations of these conditions is absolutely necessary for an accurate statement of the problem of the relationship between the anti-imperialistic and agrarian peasant revolutions of the Arab peoples. The Communist parties and groups of the Arab countries must devote special attention to the study of these conditions and make use of them in the interest of the revolutionary struggle.

3 The struggle for the liberation of the Arab peoples and for the destruction of the imperialist yoke, which dominates in the most diverse forms, in accordance with the various stages of development in different countries, has already enveloped all the Arab countries. In Morocco, and in southern

Algeria and Tripoli, the national liberation struggle manifests itself in almost continuous armed uprisings of the tribes against French, Italian, and Spanish imperialism. In Tunisia the *Destour*,<sup>5</sup> meanwhile, succeeded in heading the mass indignation and then left it leaderless. In Egypt, the postwar development is characterized by a wave of national struggle, which has led more than once to mass outbreaks. In Syria, the armed uprising of 1925 was crushed, but by 1929 there was a new wave of anti-imperialist struggle. In Palestine, mass indignation against British imperialism and its agency, counterrevolutionary Zionism, has more than once resulted in armed uprisings against the British imperialists and Zionists. In Iraq, the national movement against the English mandate does not subside. In the struggle of the *Wahhabis*,<sup>6</sup> under a peculiar religious guise there were certain elements of struggle against the agents of British imperialism, etc., etc.

What is characteristic of all these movements is that they have evoked the most lively response and sympathy all over the Arab East. In spite of the artificial political boundaries, in spite of the feudal fragmentation, and in spite of the fact that the movement was directed now against English, now against French, now Italian or Spanish imperialism, the national struggle in any one Arab country reverberated, in one degree or another, in all the Arab countries from Palestine to Morocco.

The striving of the Arab masses toward national unification with political boundaries established, not at the command of the imperialists, but on the basis of their own free decision, is inseparable from their endeavor to liberate themselves from the yoke of English, French, Italian, and Spanish imperialism. The Arab masses feel that in order to cast off the yoke of imperialism they must unite their forces, relying on a common language, historical conditions, and a common enemy. Their fusion in the revolutionary struggle against imperialism and the scope of the struggle indicate that the Arab peoples have all the prerequisites to cast off the imperialist yoke, to achieve national political independence, and to create a number of Arab states, which, thereafter, of their own free will, could unite on the basis of federal principles.

4 The conversion of the Arab countries into agrarian and raw material appendages to the metropolis and the divergence of their economic systems result in the fact that the formation of the classes of capitalist society and the development of the elements of national sovereignty proceed very slowly and irregularly. The imperialists take complete advantage of this situation in their own interests, by grouping under their leadership the reactionary feudal elements and by attempting to make of the Arabic countries strong bases for their imperialistic and aggressive policy of usurpation. In particular, the English imperialists make use of their domination of Iraq, Palestine, and Egypt, to protect the approaches to India, to prepare for a war against the USSR, and to develop their interests in the

eastern Mediterranean. The French imperialists endeavor to convert the Arab population of their colonies into cannon fodder for a future imperialist war and intervention against the USSR. The feudal landowners and the top feudal lords in all areas of sedentary population finally have gone over, more or less, to the side of imperialism. In the ranks of the Arab bourgeoisie and of the landowners tied up with it, national reformism prevails, and assumes more openly the character of counterrevolution and capitulation. The bourgeoisie and the bourgeois-landowning elements are incapable of a revolutionary struggle against imperialism. They veer more and more in the direction of a counterrevolutionary deal with it within the framework of limited pseudo-constitutional concessions, which only disguise the imperialist domination. The mass movement in the summer of 1930 in Egypt quite clearly revealed the traitorous essence of the Wafd,<sup>7</sup> which removed the slogan of "independence" and tries only to obtain a constitution, which demonstrates that it fears the awakening of the peasant masses more than complete capitulation to imperialism (agrees to sign an Anglo-Egyptian treaty). The position of the Kutlat el Watani<sup>8</sup> in Syria is determined by playing the role of the opposition, absolutely refusing to take part in any revolutionary activities and in any real struggle. Many of the former leaders in the uprising of 1925 are now sitting quietly at the feet of the French generals. The Kutlat el Watani is preparing a deal with the French oppressors. In Palestine, the Arab Executive Committee<sup>9</sup> has entered upon the road of traitorous competition with Zionism in bargaining for concessions from English imperialism in exchange for a guarantee of "peace and quiet" for the Arab masses. National reformism turns more and more to counterrevolution and capitulation, in proportion as, on the one hand, especially under the influence of the world industrial and agrarian crisis, the dissatisfaction and indignation of the toiling masses increase; the more so, that it (i.e. national reformism) does not meet with adequate opposition to the traitorous national interests on the part of the broad masses of the Arab workers and peasants, who, as yet, have been unable to organize themselves adequately and to oppose their bourgeois and bourgeois-landowning reformism with their own revolutionary platform. In Iraq, the National Party appeals to the League of Nations, but actually it does not wage a struggle against the English usurpers, but confines itself only to phrases. In Tunisia, the remnants of the Destour went over to the French imperialists. In Algeria, bourgeois-landowning national reformism demands only the granting of French citizenship to the Arabs. The bourgeois and bourgeois-landowning national reformism opposes imperialist domination only within the framework of the exploiting interests of the local bourgeoisie and landowners. They themselves want to exploit the masses of workers and peasants. However, in so far as their immediate exploiting interests, especially in a situation of crisis and imperialistic pressure on the colony, are at variance with the general national interests, they openly betray the general national interests and help imperialism in

its struggle against the masses. The traitorous counterrevolutionary nature of national reformism has not as yet been adequately revealed to the broad masses of workers, peasants, and urban petite bourgeoisie. National reformism in the Arab countries does not go beyond the political boundaries, established by imperialism, which artificially divide the Arab peoples. It capitulates before the feudal monarchs, who are tools of imperialism, and refuses to struggle against imperialism on an all-Arab scale. The peculiarity of the present stage is that, whereas in all Arab countries national reformism openly capitulates to imperialism, the masses of the workers, peasants, and urban polite bourgeoisie are more and more energetically drawn into the struggle for their everyday interests, into the national liberation struggle. The fact that counterrevolutionary national reformism has not been exposed before them to any appreciable extent, thereby threatens grave consequences, since this would make it easier for new counterrevolutionary treason and for blows from an ambush. Now, as never before, over against the capitulation and counterrevolution of national reformism there must be juxtaposed an all-Arab revolutionary anti-imperialist front of the broad masses of workers, peasants, and urban petite bourgeoisie, a front which relies on the development of the workers' and peasants' movement, and which draws from it its strength.

5 In a number of Arab countries, the working class has played and is playing an increasing role in the national liberation struggle (Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, Algeria, Tunisia, etc.). In some countries, following their destruction the trade union organizations of the working class are in the process of formation or restoration, although the majority of them are in the hands of the national reformists. Labor strikes, demonstrations, active participation of the workers in the struggle against imperialism, the withdrawal of some strata of the working class from the national reformists, are a signal that the young Arab working class has entered upon the struggle for its historic role in the anti-imperialist and agrarian revolution, in the struggle for national unity. In several countries, Communist parties have already been organized and are in the process of formation.

The world industrial and agrarian crisis, in one way or another, has enveloped all the Arab countries, having hit with particular force the workers and the peasant masses. The declines in earnings and unemployment are worsening the poor living standards of the proletariat, which are bad enough without that, and this drives it along the road to revolutionary class struggle. The ruined poor and middle peasants and workers, who are perpetually in need, and who are laid off, the representatives of the urban pauper class and the broad strata of the petite bourgeoisie, who are at present greater in number than heretofore, feel the yoke of imperialism and begin to rise for the struggle in the name of national liberation. Imperialism endeavors to cast on their shoulders all the consequences of the crisis and to square accounts at their expense. However, the new wave of peasant indignation

against the unbearable claims of the landowners, usurers, and agents of imperialism, tends to unite the workers in their struggle for their daily bread; in protest against the imperialist yoke, all Arab countries dismembered by English, French, Italian, and Spanish jackals of capital, are uniting in the struggle for national unity and national independence. Under these conditions, the growing struggle of the Arab masses against imperialism is, together with the revolutionary struggle in China, India, Indo-China, etc., in Latin America, and Black Africa, the most important moment in the crisis of the entire imperialist colonial system.

In Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, where the working-class movement has more or less taken shape, where Communist parties have been organized, where the peasant movement has reached an appreciable degree of maturity, where further development of the anti-imperialist struggle is unthinkable without a consistent and systematic struggle against national reformism – there the urgent and immediate task of the Communist parties is an agrarian peasant revolution and the organization of their work in accordance with the aims of anti-imperialism and anti-feudalism. The overthrow of the imperialist yoke, the confiscation of all concessions, enterprises, constructions, plantations, and other possessions of the imperialists, complete national political independence (plus the abolition of the monarchy in Egypt and the restoration of political unity in Syria), the confiscation of the land of all feudal landowners and colonial usurpers who live on unearned income, an eight-hour working day, and social insurance of workers at the expense of capitalists, freedom of organization for the toilers, and a workers' and peasants' government, a struggle for the liberation of the Arab peoples and their free and voluntary union – such are the main demands which define the content of the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal revolution. The delimitation of and struggle against national reformism must be based on such a foundation. Among the partial demands which should be set forth are the following: the reduction of the working day to eight hours, an increase in wages, unemployment insurance at the expense of the capitalists, freedom of workers' and peasants' organizations, annulment of the indebtedness of poor and middle peasants to usurers, landowners, and banks, discontinuation of payments for leasing land, withdrawal of all the armed forces of the imperialists, and a free popular vote on the question of political self-determination (in Egypt, about the monarchy and the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty; in Syria and Palestine, about the mandate of the League of Nations). In more backward countries, such as Iraq, Tunisia, Tripoli, Morocco, the existing Communist groups there must endeavor to organize and to bring about the spontaneous rise and growth of the anti-imperialist movement, connecting it with the struggle against the top reactionary feudal lords and national reformists, with the struggle of the workers and peasants for their everyday needs. In Algeria, which is a completely enslaved French colony, the center of gravity of the work must be shifted to the development of a struggle for the organization

of Arab workers against starvation, colonial norms of pay and general labor conditions, and to a struggle against colonial plunder of Arab lands. The unifying slogans of the anti-imperialist struggle for all the Arab countries must be: (1) down with imperialism in Arab lands; (2) complete national political independence of Arab countries, and free decision by them on the question of their political system and boundaries; (3) a voluntary federal union of the liberated Arab peoples within the framework of an all-Arab workers' and peasants' federation of the Arab peoples, on the basis of a union of the working class, the toilers of the city, and the peasantry.

The slogan of the All-Arab Workers' and Peasants' Federation of the Arab peoples could and should be set forth, not in the sense that the working class makes as the condition for its participation in the anti-imperialist national liberation struggle the outright victory of the working class and the basic masses of the peasants. It should be interpreted in the sense that, by waging a struggle for national liberation under all and any circumstances with greater firmness and consistency, the proletariat at the same time explains to the masses that there can be no lasting victory for national and political independence without an agrarian peasant revolution and the establishment of a workers' and peasants' government, at least in the more developed Arab countries (Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and Algeria). The Communist parties will be able to lead the broad masses of workers against the bourgeoisie, the peasant masses against the imperialist usurpers, landowners, and usurers; they will be able to elicit the support of the poor in the city and the masses of the petite bourgeoisie, only when they simultaneously act as leaders and organizers of the struggle against imperialism for the national liberation of the Arab countries. Hegemony over the working class cannot be realized without a persistent proletarian struggle for Arab national independence and freedom.

The Communists are duty bound to wage a struggle for national independence and national unity, not only within the narrow and artificial boundaries created by imperialism and the dynastic interests of certain Arab countries, but on an all-Arab scale, for the national unification of the entire East. In overcoming the artificially created boundaries, the anti-imperialist revolutionary movement must find its strength, must achieve a genuinely revolutionary range, must become the center of gravitation for the broadest masses. This will also facilitate the struggle against the influence of the reactionary clergy. No such situation should be allowed as the isolated outbreak of a revolutionary anti-imperialist movement in Egypt, Palestine, or in any other Arab country, without the support of the other Arab countries. The Communist parties are called upon to act as organizers in the struggle for national liberation and for an anti-imperialist revolution on an all-Arab scale.

The relationship with the petite bourgeoisie and national revolutionary groups which wage, albeit with great hesitation, a struggle against imperialism, must follow the rule: To proceed separately, but to strike together.

Occasional temporary agreements with them for militant action are permissible, provided their vacillation and inconsistency are criticized, thereby preserving the complete ideological and organizational independence of the Communist movement. The Communist parties must try to attract to the side of the anti-imperialist struggle, not only the workers and peasants, but also the broad strata of urban petite bourgeoisie. Besides taking stock of all specific conditions of the struggle, the Communist parties must bear in mind the fact that the sharpening of contradictions among imperialists, which inevitably leads to world conflict, creates a particularly favorable soil for a new upsurge of the Arab national and revolutionary movement. Both the strategic position of the Arab countries and the efforts of the imperialists to make use of the Arab peoples as cannon fodder for a new world carnage, and for the intervention against the USSR – all this lends a special significance to the anti-imperialist struggle of the Arab masses.

6 A bold and resolute setting forth of the slogan for the national liberation of all Arab peoples is especially necessary because, in spite of the quite firm and clear decisions of the Communist International, the questions of the struggle for the liberation of the Arab masses from the yoke of imperialism, both English and French, as well as world imperialism in general, have not yet occupied their proper place in the work of the Communist parties of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. Some Communist groups and individual Communists in Iraq, Algeria, and Tunisia are devoting even less attention to this question of primary importance. Opportunism, especially Rightist opportunism, which capitulates before the great powers and the national bourgeoisie on the national question, is one of the main handicaps to the development of the Communist movement in Arab countries. In Palestine, the communist party experienced its gravest crisis in connection with the Arab uprising in 1929, when the party found itself isolated from the Arab masses, as a result of Zionist deviation, which hampered the Arabization of the party. It took one and one-half years to secure the indispensable prerequisites for the Bolshevization of the party, and even so it did not occur without opportunistic efforts, under anti-Bolshevik slogans, to block the Arabization of the party. In Egypt, the party found itself completely isolated from the masses, at the very time the mighty, spontaneous outbreak of the mass movement was in full swing. Not only was it unable to expose the traitorous counterrevolutionary conduct of the Wafd and to create a revolutionary counterpoise to it, but it even permitted the crudest anti-Bolshevik errors on the matter of the irreconcilable struggle against imperialism and its reactionary monarchial agency by detaching itself from the mass anti-imperialist movement. In Syria, the Rightists, opportunistic elements openly rose up in opposition to any declaration by the Communist Party to the workers' and peasants' masses as to its mere existence, and to the fact that the Communist Party began, under its own banner, the



struggle against French imperialism. In Tunisia and Algeria, by the way, the Communist organizations are also growing weak, because of the fact that the Communists have been unable to present to the masses the question of the struggle against French imperialism. Without overcoming opportunism, and especially arrant Rightist opportunism on the Arab national question, Communist parties cannot develop in Arab countries.

Leaving in force the decisions concerning the tasks of the Communists in any one Arab country, the following steps are necessary in order to strengthen the activities of the Communists in all Arab countries:

- 1 To develop an extensive mass campaign as to the aims and tasks of the anti-imperialist Arab national liberation movement, tying it in with the regular tasks of the workers' and peasants' movement in the corresponding countries.

In waging a struggle for the overthrow of the imperialist yoke in each separate country, it is necessary to weave in this slogan with the struggle for a free decision by the Arab popular masses on the question of national self-determination, and, along with this, for the Communists to carry on propaganda for national unity in the form of an all-Arab workers' and peasants' federation.

- 2 For this purpose, it is necessary to hold large and small meetings, and wherever possible demonstrations, to issue special leaflets, to organize anti-imperialist committees to assume the initiative in the struggle, whose representatives are chosen from the factories and foundries, and from the rural and urban working population.
- 3 To create a general press organ, for the time being, for the Communist parties of Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and the Communists in Iraq. To establish a more regular and lasting contact for the exchange of experience and to coordinate the work in the early stages among the Communist parties of Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and the Communists in Iraq, bearing in mind the fact that in the future it will be necessary to secure the overall collaboration of the Communists of Tripoli, Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria. Having taken special measures to organize and to unify the Communists in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco, the future course must be to detach the organization of all these countries from the French Communist Party and make them independent units.

## Appendix 3

### **“The Tasks of the Communist Party of Palestine in the Countryside”\***

1 Starting from the premise that, in an agrarian country such as Palestine, it is the peasant revolution that is the most significant, and considering that the basic task of the communist movement – the national and social liberation of the country from British imperialism, from the Zionist and effendi (landowner) yoke – is the prerequisite for the struggle for the ultimate goal – the dictatorship of the proletariat – the Communist Party must, in the first place, increase only those cadres of the revolutionary forces which could direct the peasant activities on the right road, the cadres of revolutionary Arab workers. The Arabization of the party, that is, its transformation into the real party of the Arab working masses, is thus the first and the basic condition for successful work in the countryside.

2 Together with this the party, continuously strengthening its influence on the urban workers (industrial, transport, and unskilled labor), who constitute its main support, must begin to create durable ties with the mass of landless peasants and those with very little land. A great number of semi-proletarians (seasonal workers) and agricultural workers serve in Arab countries as the vital link between the peasantry and the young urban working class. Therefore the Communist Party of Palestine must direct all its efforts toward an active struggle for the semi-proletarians and agricultural workers.

The most important task is the creation of unions of builders, who are engaged in public construction, as well as unions of agricultural workers. The setting forth of specific demands to improve the condition of the agricultural workers, such as: the increase of their wages, etc., under the specific conditions prevailing in Palestine, must be accompanied by an energetic and continuous campaign against the crowding out of Arab workers by Zionists, and the creation of a united front of Arab and Jewish workers for the struggle against Zionist usurpation and exploitation

\* Resolution of the Eighth Congress of the Communist Party of Palestine. Published in Arabic in *Ila al-Aman (Forward)*, the organ of the Communist Party of Palestine, 1931, as found in Ivar Spector, *The Soviet Union and the Muslim World 1917–1958* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1959), pp. 156–160.

by colonists, planters, and enterprises. The concrete demands of the agricultural workers are: an increase in wages and the equalization of the earnings of Arab and Jewish workers, abolition of feudal forms of exploitation, protection of women and child labor, etc.

3 The main slogans of the Communist Party with regard to poor peasants and peasants with very little land, as well as to poor Bedouins, who comprise, in general, 35 percent of the non-urban population of the country, are as follows: *the overthrow of British imperialism*, which is the enslaver of the peasantry and supports Zionist colonization and feudal capitalist exploitation of the peasants by Arab and Jewish landowners and planters. Only the overthrow of British imperialism will insure the solution of the central problem of the landless peasants and those with very little land – the land problem.

4 “The land belongs to him who tills it, and neither ‘hums’ or ‘tult’ (one-fifth of the crop exacted as taxes) should be paid for it”; “not a single ‘dunam’ (one-tenth of a ga) to the imperialists and Zionist usurpers! Armed resistance of the fellahin to any attempt to expropriate fellahin crops and harat (land under cultivation)”; revolutionary seizure of land which belongs to the governments, to rich Jewish colonists, Zionist communities, big Arab landowners and planters, and its division by fellahin committees among the landless peasants and those who have very little land, and Bedouins – these are the three basic slogans of the Communist Party on the land question. Along with the demand of land for the peasants and the struggle against expropriation, the Communist Party must advance the slogan of the preservation of pasture for the Bedouins and oppose their being crowded out of these pastures.

5 In response to the oppression of the government, it is necessary to set forth the following slogans: *nonpayment of taxes* (ashar), *refusal to pay indemnities* levied on the villages after the August uprising, fire the police who scoff at the fellahin. However, passive resistance alone (nonpayment of taxes, refusal to perform compulsory labor) is not enough: the solution of all burning questions, the real liquidation of oppression, is possible only by *armed revolt* under the leadership of the working class.

6 Various forms of feudal exploitation on the part of Arab landowners can be overcome by the fellah only through revolution: non-payment of taxes to the landowner and usurer, seizure of implements and seed which are necessary to the fellah to till the land, opposition to confiscation of live-stock for payment of debts, partial demands along the line of the struggle against the enslavement of the fellah by the Arab landowner, the usurer, and the waqf administration, etc.

7 Non-recognition of deals *concerning the sale of land* at the expense of the fellahin, *a struggle against the Zionist usurpers* who steal the peasant’s

land; refusal to transfer to other areas, to Transjordan, Syria, or the interior of Palestine, calling upon the Jewish workers to break with the communities of Zionist robbers and colonizers and to extend aid to the expelled fellahin – these are the concrete slogans for the fellahin and Bedouins in their struggle against Zionist encroachment.

8 In contrast to the feudal and clerical forms of organization (mejlis, sheikh), the fellahin must create organizations for mutual aid, must choose peasant committees to conduct separate campaigns (a struggle against the seizure of land by the Zionists, non-payment of the hums or taxes), must carry out mass activities, such as, for instance, nonpayment of indemnities or debts, mobilization of the peasants in neighboring villages, or even of the entire country, to aid individual villages which are subject to Zionist expropriation (Vaadi Haveres), and to government punitive expeditions (Tyre, Hebron), or to arbitrary landowners (Nablus).

9 An energetic struggle against the national reformists and all kinds of Zionist imperialist agents, and, at the same time, a struggle against any project of sham aid on the part of the government or landowners. In particular, it is necessary to sharpen this struggle in connection with the proposed Simpson project “for an agricultural bank,” and various “loans” to the fellah. “No alms, but the annulment of the hums; no new loans, no landowner-kulak bank, but down with the old debts.”<sup>1</sup>

10 The exposure of the traitorous leadership of the effendi, mejlis, and mufti, must occupy a prominent place in our educational work. Using the August uprising as a concrete example, it is necessary to demonstrate to the peasants that their struggle and sacrifices will bring results only when they succeed in sweeping away, not only the Zionist colonizers but also the British government and the landowners. It is necessary to contrast the execution of the three rebels in Akka with the deal of the top Arabs with the imperialists, to point out the fact that 90 percent of the land bought up by the Zionists was sold to them by Arab landowners, who, by concentrating the fellahin lands in their own hands under the guise of “saving” this land from the Zionists, do this so they themselves can exploit the fellahin (explaining the “struggle” of the feudal lords against Zionism). Closely connected with the struggle against the landowners is the struggle against their hateful assistants and go-betweens. This struggle has to be broadened and included in the struggle against the effendi and the Zionists. However, during the work of enlightenment careful consideration must be given to the living conditions and religious factors connected with the backwardness and illiteracy of the fellahin, and at this stage, under no circumstances should the problem of the “din,” rijel-ed-din,<sup>2</sup> waqf, etc., be touched. The intensive propaganda by the Zionists, “histadrut,”<sup>3</sup> and elements of the Arab countryside who have been bribed, on behalf of the

false slogan of "peace" makes it necessary to take cognizance of this agitation and to expose it mercilessly. The reply to "peace" is Vaadi Haveres, to "workers' solidarity" is Avada ivrit,<sup>4</sup> etc., etc.

11 Even now it is necessary to develop among the fellahin wide propaganda of the idea of the Soviets. Following the example of the solution of the peasant and national question in the USSR. and the new achievements of the Chinese peasants, it is necessary to instill in the peasants confidence in their own strength and to prepare the soil for the struggle for a workers' and peasants' revolutionary government, which alone is capable of solving all fellahin problems.

12 An exchange of visits of workers and peasants, not only individuals but groups in nearby villages and cities, is a very important means of contact and of the concrete realization of a workers' and peasants' bloc.

13 The Communist Party must advance a number of transitional demands connected with the daily needs of the fellah and his economy: the irrigation of the fellah's land at the expense of the government, improvement of roads, reduction of railroad rates, abolition of forced labor, distribution of permanent loans, especially to the poor and to the victims of elemental calamities (locusts, mice, drought, earthquakes, etc.), the construction of schools and hospitals in the villages, abolition of arrest for debt, abolition of confiscation of property, abolition of corporal punishment, etc., etc.

14 Making extensive use of peasant gatherings (Friday in the mosque, Nabi Musa, Nabi Rubin, etc.) for propaganda for the slogans of an agrarian revolution, remembering that it is during such mass celebrations that the fighting capacity of the fellahin is appreciably aroused.

15 Propagandist literature for the fellahin must be written in the simplest language and in the form of short leaflets. The fellahin, themselves, as much as possible, should distribute them.

16 Forms of organization in the village must be as follows: the creation of fellahin committees and local unions of landless peasants and of peasants with very little land. These committees must be elected and must enjoy the complete confidence of the peasants.

17 The most important task is the creation of Party and Komsomol cells in the villages for the leadership of the work among the peasants.

## Appendix 4

# “Work Among the Peasants” and “The Struggle Against Zionism”\*

### “WORK AMONG THE PEASANTS”

#### The agrarian question in Palestine

1 The August uprising of 1929 focused the attention of the imperialist government, as well as that of all parties in the country, on the Arab fellah. The agrarian question rose before the English imperialists and their allies (the Zionists) in all its dimensions. A number of very important works appeared, explaining the situation of the fellah and the agrarian movement in the country: the Johnson-Crobie and Simpson and Vilkansky<sup>1</sup> investigation committees.

Once again, by concrete political example, the principle appeared to be correct that “the national question is mainly the peasant question” (Lenin), and that a victorious revolution in the Arab countries, at this stage, depends, in the first place, on the correct presentation by the Communist Party (the party of the working class, which is still young in these countries) of the peasant question and on the correct policy of the party with regard to the basic masses of the peasantry.

2 What constitutes the Arab peasantry in Palestine? Simpson gives the following figures, as of 1930:

Urban population	340,962
Non-urban	605,029
Bedouins (among the above)	103,331

If we add to this the fact that there are 115,100 Jews in the cities, and that a considerable part of the urban Arab population is directly or indirectly connected with the countryside, it will appear that about 80 percent of the

\* Theses approved by the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Palestine. Published in Arabic, in *Ila al-Aman (Forward)*, the organ of the Communist Party of Palestine, 1931; in the Hebrew language, in a separate brochure, in 1931.

Arab population of the country are fellahin or semifellahin, who are engaged in agriculture. Indeed, according to government data, the number of Arab families engaged in agriculture amounts to 88,980.

As regards a very important question, the problem of the social stratification of the population of the countryside, there exist no statistics whatsoever, neither government nor Zionist. Only by comparing the figures included in various journals and reports are we able to obtain the following table (usually imperialist statistics treat the peasantry as a unit, mechanically dividing the land according to the “heads” of families).

*Table A.1* Total number of families engaged in agriculture – 86,000. They have 9 million dunams of land

<i>Landless</i>	<i>Families</i>	<i>Amount of land in millions of dunams</i>
(a) Farm hands	25,000	
(b) Sharecroppers	15,000	
Small fellahin economies	46,000	5
Landowners	250	4

Thus, at one pole there are 250 landowners, owning 4,000,000 dunams of land, and, on the other, 25,000 landless peasant families. Between these poles there are 46,000 small peasant economies, with their own plots, 100 dunams per family, and 15,000 work as tenants on the land belonging to the landowners.

3 Already, based on these figures, emerges the basic question confronting the main mass of the Palestinian peasantry: the land question. The imperialist and Zionist “theoreticians” allegedly maintain that the fellah has “enough land, even too much, and that the entire question boils down to its cultivation.” This estimate does not hold water: about 30 percent of the peasants have no land whatsoever, more than 50 percent have an inadequate amount, and thus from 80 to 90 percent of the agrarian population is confronted with an urgent and immediate problem, either to get land or to augment what they have. Meanwhile, for the past ten years, the process continues, not of decreasing but of increasing the number of landless peasants and those with very little land. The English government explains this process as due to the increase of the population of the country. In reality, the lack of land is the result of the continuous expropriation of peasant lands by the government, the Zionists, and the landowners.

4 Expropriation of the fellah constitutes the main cause of his poverty and “land hunger. . . .” It assumes various forms:

- a *Expropriation by the government*: The British government has taken over all those lands which formerly belonged in the category of *jiftlik*,<sup>2</sup> and, in addition, by a special law in 1928, it authorized the High Commissioner of Palestine to expropriate any land needed by the government. The expropriating activity of the government affected mainly those sections which are necessary for strategic purposes (railroads, ports, etc.), or for concessions (the Dead Sea and the lands connected with oil deposits).
- b *Expropriation by landowners*: This long-drawn-out process, which took place even under the Turks, has become particularly apparent since the English occupation. The cadastre introduced by the English government was largely instrumental in the seizure of the land by the landowners and the legalization of this robbery. Even forms of land-holding peculiar to Palestine are being converted into tools of expropriation of the fellahin by the landholders. Thus, in 1928, in the Arab villages of Palestine, no less than 56 percent of the land was held in common ("*musha*"), but by 1929 this figure was only 46 percent. By the end of the current decade the government plans to convert the entire "*musha*" land into "*mafruz*" (i.e. to divide it). But this "division" in many places amounts to camouflaged expropriation of the peasant's land by the landowner. Under present conditions, the income from the land, which he receives now from the peasant in the form of "hums," is not so important to the landowner as is the possibility of selling it or converting it into a plantation; to handle individual peasants is much easier than to deal with an entire community.

Thus, it is a false premise held by Zionist "theoreticians," the Poalei Zionists, which is also shared by certain communists, that regards the division of the "*musha*" solely from the standpoint of capitalist progress: the transition from a natural to a money economy, and the creation of small peasant proprietors. In this particular situation, under imperialist and Zionist oppression and the arbitrary rule of the effendi, the partition of the "*musha*" is the method of expropriation of the small fellah, and it facilitates the carrying out of imperialist Zionist plans. Not infrequently the expropriation of the peasants is being carried out by the landowners hand-in-glove with the government and the Zionists. In this connection, it is very characteristic that in 1930, under pressure of the agrarian movement, the English were compelled to pass a law limiting the sale of land to Zionists. This law was scrapped by the Arab landowners, who, by evading the prohibition, sold the land. The English paper, *Falestin*, for November 22, 1930, draws attention to an extraordinarily interesting fact: the Arab landowners, after the publication of the "White Paper," having found out that from the English standpoint there is a loophole in the fictitious ban on selling land inhabited by Arab peasants, began to evict the poor peasants "in advance,"



so that by the time of the sale the land would appear to be “vacant” and its transfer to the Zionists therefore possible.

- c *Expropriation by Zionists*: For the fellah, Zionist expropriation is the most dangerous and cruel. Whereas, under expropriation by the government or landowners the fellah is not ordinarily driven from the land immediately, although this expropriation does provide legal grounds for such action, the Zionist societies cannot help but to drive him out.

According to statistics provided by L. Ferah, an Arab agronomist, in only one northern plain 8,720 fellahin were evicted. If we add to this the expropriation which has taken place for the past year in other regions, the number of fellahin evicted by the Zionists will exceed twenty thousand.

The Zionist expedition is distinguished from the government and feudal lords, likewise in that it deprives the fellah of any possibility of obtaining work and thus transforms the expropriated peasants into a surplus “reserve army” of labor, into an army of homeless unemployed.

- d *Expropriation by various religious and capitalist societies*: It is impossible to overlook also the activity of various missionary (English, French, and American) societies, as well as the capitalists of every nationality who buy up the land and often make use of the Arab bourgeois compradores (in most cases, the Christian) as a screen. The rise of the movement in 1928 (mass demonstrations in Gaza and other cities) against the missionary congress was not religious in nature, but reflected the anti-imperialist mood of the fellahin.

5 The landless peasantry, which grows continuously as a result of expropriation, is the revolutionary factor both in the village and in the city. Only an insignificant part of the landless peasantry (chiefly in the regions inhabited by Christians and Bedouins) finds a way out through emigration. The number of Arab emigrants for the past eight years amounts to 10,575 (of whom 8,585 represent indigenous inhabitants of the country), which constitutes about 1½ percent of the aboriginal inhabitants of the population of the country, the bulk of which is made up of peasants. The dispossessed peasant, having no opportunity to find work in his own village, provides cheap labor for his exploiters, the Arab landowners and Jewish colonists in other regions. According to government reports for 1929, “the agricultural worker, who works together with his wife and child, received, on the average, from five to twelve piasters per day.”

The problem of landlessness is closely interwoven with the problem of the agrarian proletariat. It is safe to say that, as a general rule, imperialism and Zionism, which crowd out the Arab peasants from their lands, put an end to the feudal methods of exploitation of these peasants, only to leave

them a prey to hunger and to create of them in a narrow and undeveloped market cheap (almost for a pittance) labor for capitalist exploitation, which appreciably lowers their living standards. The example cited by Simpson from the words of the chief engineer of the port of Haifa, is very striking: forty Arab peasants were hired to work in the Atlit stone quarry, and the next day there came from four to five hundred fellahin to ask for work. Of the general mass of workers in Palestine, the landless peasantry, the semiproletarians, and the agricultural workers are the most oppressed, the poorest stratum, and hide within themselves, as the August out-break demonstrated, colossal revolutionary energy.

6 Closely connected with the question of the landless peasants and Arab agricultural workers is the Bedouin question. The number of Bedouins in Palestine, according to official data of 1922, amounts to 103,000. The plight of the Bedouins and of the semi-sedentary tribes beggars description. The quantity of free pasture for camels and other livestock is at a minimum, and, at the same time, the strengthening of the imperialistic political apparatus and the division of Arabia into various "mandated" territories destroys the possibility of "rezzu" (raids by nomadic Bedouin tribes).

Perpetual hunger is the source of constant discontent among the Bedouins, and this discontent is always on the verge of becoming an armed uprising. It is characteristic that up to the present time the imperialist government has not dared to disarm the Bedouin tribes, either in Transjordan or in Palestine. The participation of the Bedouins in the August uprising proves what a great role they could play in a revolutionary revolt of the masses. At the same time, it became evident that the sheikhs and the leaders of these tribes can be bribed, as can their liaisons with the top Muslim clergy (mejlis, Islami) and with the imperialists.

The northern march begun by the Bedouins of southern Palestine was broken up due to the negotiations of the English captain, Lilar, with the sheikhs. As regards the Transjordanian Bedouins, the "Bedouin peril" (their participation in the August uprising) was prevented chiefly by the English forces.

The only solution of the Bedouin question is the transition of the Bedouins to a sedentary economy. But in spite of certain maneuvers of the imperialists in this direction (the allocation of thirty thousand dunams of land to the Bedouins), they are not in a position to carry out colonization in earnest, and the pauperization of the Bedouin tribes proceeds far more rapidly than their settlement on the land; the Bedouins continuously replenish the army of landless peasants and semi-proletarians.

Besides the landless peasants comprising the basic masses of the Arab agrarian population, there is a large number of peasants with very little land. According to the figures of the Shaw Commission, the minimum

allotment required to feed a peasant family is a section of 130 dunams, but, at the present time, the average allotment is only from 90 to 100 dunams. In addition to the constant threat to the peasant of complete expropriation, he finds himself under the yoke of a horrible exploitation, which continually lowers his living standard and transforms him into a slave.

In the Arab countries there exists *a peculiar form of feudal exploitation* of the fellahin. The most important features of this feudal slavery are as follows:

- 1 *The lease system*, at the basis of which lies the unilateral contract. The land belongs to the feudal lord and the peasant, for the right of tilling it at his own risk and at his own expense, must pay the “hums” (one-fifth), which in reality is tantamount to one-third, or even to one-half of the crop. The landowners can at any moment cancel the contract without warning and evict the fellah.
- 2 *The debt system*: Although in the Arab countries, officially serfdom does not exist, nevertheless the landowner can not only evict a peasant whenever it pleases him, but can even affix him to the land. The instrument of this enslavement is the peasant’s indebtedness. The peasant, who has no capital turnover whatsoever (his basic capital amounts, according to Mr Vilkansky, to from £20 to £30, and we must also bear in mind that it is not the poor, but the middle fellah that has been taken as the basis) is forced to resort to “credit” from either the landowner or the usurer, and often from both. The interest on the loan reaches 50 percent (*ashara hamastashar*).<sup>3</sup> The fellah, who never has an opportunity to free himself from his debts, is being transformed into a serf, continuously working for his creditor. Mr Bowman, director of the Department of Education in Palestine, writes: “The plight of the agricultural population beggars description. There is not a single village that is not burdened with debts. . . . In certain places, money is so scarce that the fellahin cannot pay their debts without incurring new ones. ‘For several years we have been in deep water, but soon the water will be over our heads’” – such is the typical comment of the peasants.
- 3 The third characteristic feature of feudal exploitation in Palestine is the close contact between the feudal landowners and the government. The latter, by means of taxes, plunders the peasant as much as the landowner, and its entire apparatus (police, jails, etc.) are at the disposal of the feudal lords. Not only has the English government failed to annul the glaring feudal law about imprisonment for debt, but it is being applied on such a scale that one can say without exaggeration that the majority of the Arab peasants have tasted imprisonment for being in arrears.

- 4 The fourth feature is the bond between the feudal lords and the top Muslim clergy, and through it with the government. This bond was particularly strong and durable under the Sultan, who governed not only the “*vaherai*” land, but also the “*miri*.”<sup>4</sup> This situation led certain communists to an erroneous interpretation of the Asiatic method of production, as one which excludes feudal relations in Arab countries: in reality, the administration of the land by the Sultan was conducted through a considerable layer of feudal lords, pashas, and landowners, who applied almost the same feudal method of exploitation as Russian landowners under the Tsarist regime. English imperialism is restoring this bond. It tries to find taxes for the waqf, and in return secures for itself a decisive influence over this institution.
- 5 The fifth sign of feudal relations in the Arab village is, finally, the “*hanas*” – protection, which the feudal lord extends to “his” peasants in their relations with other villages, as well as with the authorities. This “*hanas*” creates the illusion of a common interest between the fellah and the landowner.
- 6 Of no less significance (although of secondary importance in regard to the land question, and not the main problem, as the Zionists maintain) in Arab countries are the irrigation question and the rational use of the land. Marx has already pointed out the enormous significance of irrigation in eastern countries. Imperialism and feudalism, not being interested in the development of the country, hamper the intensification of agriculture by every possible means. The capital needed for irrigation is imported only in the proportion warranted by the expropriation of the fellahin and their transformation into capitalist hired labor (for plantations, and so on). The enrichment of certain well-to-do peasants in regions where, in the interest of capitalist planters, irrigation is introduced, is in no way characteristic of the masses of the Arab peasants, the pauperization of the majority of whom, even in those same regions, is becoming even more acute. The number of kulaks among the Arabs is very insignificant.

The amount of land possessed by the 23,573 families living in the 104 villages covered by the Simpson statistics is as follows:

*Table A.2* Land possessed by families living in villages,  
Palestine

<i>Number of families</i>	<i>Size of plot</i>
16,633 have less than	100 dunams
1,463 have from	100 to 120 dunams
1,604 have from	120 to 140 dunams
3,873 have more than	140 dunams
23,573 families total	

- 7 The main forms of exploitation of the fellah by the British government (besides complete support of imperialistic Zionism and the Arab landowner) are as follows: in the first place, the extraordinarily heavy taxes. In 1930 the government set the *ashar* for the population of the rural districts at £225,849, but squeezed out only £120,000, or 55 percent; from the *verko*<sup>5</sup> set at £192,924 only £60,000, or 30 percent, was received.

It is often impossible to obtain taxes without the sale of the land at auction. Even according to the opinion of the governor of Jaffa, “fifty percent of the agrarian population, in view of the small income from their economy, not exceeding £30 per year for a family of six persons, should be altogether exempt from taxation.” They do not possess anything which could be sold to pay their arrears.

*Table A.3* Comparison of taxes in certain countries in Palestinian pounds per capita of population

<i>Country</i>	<i>Total taxes</i>	<i>Agricultural tax</i>
Turkey	1.82	1.43
Egypt	2.75	1.51
Greece	2.85	1.73
Palestine	3.05	1.92

**Agrarian reform or agrarian revolution**

1 The desperate plight of the peasantry, their action in 1929, and the continuous growth of the agrarian movement – all this has brought the agrarian question sharply to the attention of the British imperialists, as well as of all Arab and Jewish parties in Palestine.

Such a situation can no longer endure; a way out is necessary. Hence, all kinds of government commissions and reports (Johnson, Crobie, Strinland, Simpson) and various demands advanced by Arab and Jewish parties and the press. All these proposals boil down to the carrying out of agrarian reforms. The “improvement” of the plight of the fellah has become the slogan of all parties. What are these programs? At whose expense must the reforms be carried out?

2 In the first place, it is necessary to consider the “agrarian program” of the British government. It is tantamount to demagoguery and deceit. The so-called reduction of taxes (“*ashar*”) resulted in practice *in doubling them*. Likewise, the agrarian “reforms” of the government have a single purpose: under the guise of “improving” the condition of the fellahin, they continue the pillaging policy of the government and the Zionists, strengthen the

position of the effendi, and primarily guarantee the payment of taxes to the government, whose needs are increasing daily (military-strategic construction, etc.). The proposal by Miles for a loan of £2,800,000 serves the same purpose. It is clear that the landless peasants will derive no benefit whatsoever from this loan; their “colonization” (if it takes place at all) will become only a new system of enslavement and exploitation, whereas the debt of £2,800,000, plus £4,500,000 which has remained since 1927 will even increase still further the dependence of the country on British capital. Paltry favors to the peasants (as, for instance, the £35,000 allocated by the government) are nothing but an attempt at temporary pacification of the countryside. But even these pitiful gifts will undoubtedly find their way, not to the poor fellahin, but to landowners and kulaks.

“The agrarian reform” of the government, which in no respect touches either the foundations of the Zionist policy of plunder or the landowners’ lands, and which does not solve the question of irrigation and the increase of the capital turnover of the fellah, will not be able to stop the development of the agrarian movement.

3 The agrarian program of various Arab national groups, insofar as it emanates from the program of the Arab Executive Committee and from the demands of numerous “fellahin parties” amounts to a decrease in taxes, a struggle against “middle men” and Zionist purchasers of the land. The sincerity of this program is entirely suspect, since the Arab landowners represented in the Executive Committee themselves sell land to the Zionists.

However, neither the rightist nor the “leftist” Arab nationalists emphasize such basic features of the agrarian peasant question as the landlessness of the peasantry, the feudal exploitation of the village by the landowners, “the hums,” peasant indebtedness, etc. Even a group, such as the Hamdiel-Huseini, does not advance the question of *land* for the peasants. Agrarian reform, as the Arab nationalists intend to carry it out, serves only to deceive the fellah, for it does not solve the basic peasant questions. Moreover, all proposals by the nationalists on the agrarian question suffer from one and the same defect – they do not connect the solution of the agrarian question with the overthrow of imperialism. Their partial demands do not go beyond the framework of the mandate system, which is “constitutional.” Therefore, not only are they incapable of organizing a peasant movement, but, in fact, they impede its development.

4 The agrarian program of the Zionists, from the revisionists to the leftist Poalei Zionists, can be formulated briefly: to carry out (it goes without saying, not against British imperialism) an agrarian *reform*, not in order to free the land for the peasants, but to free the peasants from the land and transfer it to the Jewish Zionist colonists. M. Belinson, a prominent Zionist journalist, publishes in the organ of the Histadrut a “résumé” of his thoughts on

the agrarian question, as follows: “The misfortune of the fellah lies not in the inadequate supply of land, but rather in its surplus.” The leftist Poalei Zionists follow the same line, regarding the expropriation of the fellah as a progressive factor in the development of capitalism.

5 All the programs of the government, the Arab nationalists, and the Zionists have one thing in common – they all see the solution of the fellah question only from “above,” that is, an agrarian reform carried out in one way or another by the government. They reject the solution of the agrarian question in accordance with its internal dynamism, with the aid of the peasants, in “plebeian” fashion. The presence of the same methods of expropriation and exploitation of the peasants by imperialism, in spite of continued and repeated agrarian movements in Palestine and in other Arab lands, the peasant uprisings in Syria (1921, 1925, 1927), in Iraq (1920, 1921), in Palestine (1921 and 1929), and numerous partisan uprisings of the fellahin, the growth of peasant “banditry,” demonstrates that in Palestine and in other Arab countries the solution of the agrarian question is possible in only one way – the overthrow of imperialism as a result of a victorious agrarian revolution led by the proletariat.

6 The task of the Communist Party, as the vanguard of the working class, the only class whose interests at the present stage coincide basically with the interests of the masses of the peasantry, is the direction of the active peasant forces along the line of a decisive struggle against imperialism, and the destruction in this struggle of the hegemony of the Arab national bourgeoisie, and its replacement by the hegemony of the working class. While all other parties are interested in deceiving the peasants and in the reformist distortion of their demands, the Communist Party can and must develop revolutionary methods of solving the agrarian question. The imperialist government demagogically interprets the solution of the agrarian question to be at the expense of the “entire population,” which means at the expense of the poor peasants, at the expense of an increase in oppression and exploitation of the peasantry; the nationalists see the solution of the question in strengthening the position of the landowners and bourgeoisie, and in toying with the struggle against the Zionists; the Zionists want to increase the expropriation of the fellahin and they camouflage this by talking about a struggle with the Arab landowners. The Communist Party sees that the only solution of the peasant question lies in an insurgent revolutionary struggle by the basic masses of the peasants under the leadership of the working class led by its Communist Party against the imperialists, Zionists, and Arab landowners.

## “THE STRUGGLE AGAINST ZIONISM”

1 “Zionism is the expression of the exploiting and great power oppressive strivings of the Jewish bourgeoisie, which makes use of the persecution of the Jewish national minorities in Eastern Europe for the purpose of imperialistic policy to insure its domination” (Open Letter of the Executive Committee of the Communist International, November 26, 1930). To achieve this goal Zionism has allied itself via the mandate and the Balfour Declaration with British imperialism. In return for the support extended to it by the British imperialists, Zionism has turned itself into a tool of British imperialism to suppress the national liberation movement of the Arab masses. At the same time, it is itself making a tool of the Jewish population of Palestine, including the semiproletarian and proletarian strata.

2 Thus, in Palestine, in addition to imperialistic oppression, Zionism, as the militant detachment of imperialism, wages a colonizing struggle of annihilation against the local toiling masses. This struggle goes through three stages:

- 1 Settlement in the country of Jewish immigrants under the protection of British bayonets. Only an insignificant part of this immigration is spontaneous. It is, in the first place, an immigration of cadres, specially trained by means supplied by the Jewish bourgeoisie (so-called “*halutsim*”), and specially prepared to seize the country, and to create a “Jewish state.” According to information supplied by the Histadrut, more than 90 percent of the immigrants who joined it abroad are members of various Zionist parties: “Poalei Zion,” “Heholuts,” “Tseirei Zion,” etc. Only 5 percent of the Jewish immigrants are workers. The majority, however, is composed of bourgeois and petit bourgeois elements including counter-revolutionists exiled from the USSR, etc. The fact remains, however, that during the first forty years of the existence of Zionism only 2,000 immigrants entered Palestine, but during the past ten years, since the opening of Jewish immigration by British imperialism, 130,000 have entered (of whom 90,000 remained in the country); this shows that those who arrive in the country come not by “accident” or “spontaneously,” but for the purpose of creating a Jewish state for the Zionists, that is, to win preferential rights for the Jewish bourgeoisie, as compared with the Arab bourgeoisie, to exploit the toiling masses of Palestine by expelling from the country parts of the Arab population and enslaving the rest. One of the leaders of the Jewish National Fund, in a speech made on June 28, 1930, openly declared: “If we take away the land from the Arabs in Palestine, there remains plenty of land in other Arab countries. For several thousand fellahin families, we are not going to stop the solution of the Jewish question.”



- 2 The second stage of Zionist occupation is the expropriation of the Arab peasants and the colonization of these regions with Jews, the crowding out of Arab workers and their replacement with Jews, the crowding out of Arab small businessmen and artisans and the strengthening of Jewish capital.
- 3 In order to implement these two stages, immigration and colonization, which are the indispensable prerequisites for the creation of a “Jewish state,” the Jewish bourgeoisie abroad has collected a comparatively huge fund from the broad masses of the Jewish population (Jewish petite bourgeoisie), by deceit and by appealing to religious feelings, and from the big Jewish bourgeoisie.

*Table A.4 Money collected for the Jewish National Fund*

<i>Collection period</i>	<i>Amount collected</i>
Over 8½ years	£3,788,952
For 10 years	£1,707,229
	£5,496,181 (Palestinian)

To this we should add about £15,000,000 (according to Gufin, a director of the Anglo-Palestinian Bank) invested by the Jewish bourgeoisie in the building of Palestine, not via “national” institutions, but directly. This relatively huge capital, considering Palestinian conditions, plus the military forces of the British imperialists, and the enormous influence of the English administrative apparatus, have produced, as compared with the Zionist plans for a Jewish state, insignificant results (6,752 colonists), but they have succeeded in exercising catastrophic influence on the Arab masses. The property of the Jewish communities has increased at the expense of rural and urban lands from 300,000 dunams in 1929 to 1,250,000 in 1930. One million dunams, that is, 100,000 ga, amounts to practically nothing for mass colonization and the solution of the “Jewish question.” However, the land hunger of the fellahin and Bedouins being what it is, and with the presence of thousands of landless peasants and others with very little land, the seizure of over a million dunams, or about 13 percent of the arable land, means pauperization for the fellahin and Bedouins on an unheard-of scale and tempo. The total number of fellahin families expelled from their land by the Zionists amounts to 20,000.

The prewar colonization of Palestine by the Zionists differs from that of the postwar period, when Zionism became an organic part of British imperialism, in that in the prewar era part of the expropriated peasants found work among the Jewish colonists, who exploited them but did not crowd them out. Since the war, however, Zionist colonization has been accompanied by a struggle for the extermination of the

Arab fellahin and workers, by implementing the slogan, “*Kibush avoda*.”<sup>6</sup> The Jewish immigrant workers not only establish themselves on lands seized from the fellahin, where they settle down with the support of Zionist societies, not only do they introduce the problem of Jewish labor in all enterprises established by Jewish capital and the exclusion of Arab labor, not only do they demand from the government an increase in the number of Jewish workers and clerks (in reality, in government institutions and enterprises Jewish immigrants not only obtain work along with the Arabs, but appreciably more than they do and usually faster), but they likewise crowd out the Arab workers from those Jewish colonies where they have been working for years. According to Zionist statistics, for instance, in Jerusalem for the past year the number of Arab construction workers decreased from 1,500 to 500, while the number of Jewish workers increased from 550 to 1,600; in the Jewish colonies, instead of 8,000 Arab workers, there remain only 4,500, and now a struggle is being waged to eliminate even those who are left.

3 Thus Zionist activity has been detrimental to all strata of the Arab population, with the exception of the landowners. According to Dr Rupin, 90 percent of the lands purchased by the Zionists were sold by Arab effendi. The cost of the land has risen by leaps and bounds (from £0.30 per dunam prior to the war to from £3 to £4 at the present time). Zionist colonization accelerates the expropriation of the fellahin by the feudal lords, who concentrate the peasant land in their hands, in order to sell it to the Zionists. Only of late, part of the Arab landowners have begun to make use of their plots to rationalize their economy, thereby slowing down the sale of land to the Zionists. However, in the latter case, the effendi do not confine themselves to the expropriation of the small fellahin. If Zionism previously helped only to strengthen the financial position of the Arab capitalists and landowners, now it transforms them into an outright weapon of Zionist imperialist colonization, driving them to plunder the peasant lands in order to resell them to Zionist societies.

4 The third stage of Zionist usurpation is the creation of political privileges for Jews, as compared with the Arab population. This is expressed by making it easier for Jews to obtain citizenship, by extending to the “Jewish Agency” consultative functions, by privileges for Jewish municipalities, by officially recognizing the ancient Hebrew language, etc. All this creates for the Jewish bourgeoisie an opportunity to continue the nonsensical deceit of the Jewish masses about the idea of a “Jewish state” and to increase the oppression of the Arab masses. Therefore the struggle against Zionism is such a natural and inevitable manifestation of Arab mass indignation that not one of these Arab parties, even those representing the effendi and the compradores, can refuse to make use of anti-Zionist slogans.

Inasmuch as the bulk of the Jewish population of Palestine is under the direct influence and leadership of the Zionists, who conduct their imperialist policy in the name of the Jewish nation and for a Jewish state, the anti-Zionist movement emerges in the form of an anti-Jewish movement, and affords an opportunity to the English imperialists and the Jewish bourgeoisie, together with the Arab landowners, to turn the dissatisfaction of the Arab masses into the channel of a struggle against the Jewish national minority *as a whole*.

5 However, it would be very erroneous to regard imperialism, Zionism, and the Jewish population solely as one organic whole (which, for the time being, they are with regard to the Arab masses), among whom there are no internal contradictions which undermine these oppressive forces from within. In their national and social liberation struggle the Arab masses, led by the Communist Party, must give careful consideration to these internal contradictions, hostile to the colonizing forces, and must make use of them on a very wide scale. In the first place, the acute crisis of imperialism and the growing weakness of the British Empire compel English imperialism to resort to various maneuvers at the expense of its alliance with Zionism. The imperialists are interested in the privileges and in the growth of the Jewish minority supported by English bayonets, but still they have no wish to create a Jewish state. Hence there is a conflict between the demands of the Jewish bourgeoisie, who want to go much too far, and British imperialism. These conflicts, however, cannot be regarded as serious, especially as signs of a breach. Nevertheless, such a clash exposes Zionist deceit to the Jewish masses of Poland, America, etc., and weakens the influence of Zionism, which is expressed in a reduction of the influx of money into Palestine. As a result of this there emerges, in the first place, a conflict between Zionist leadership and those Jewish immigrants who depend on subsidies from Zionist societies, and to whom the Zionists are often in no position to give work, or even minimum assistance (in 1926 in Palestine there were over ten thousand unemployed immigrants). Second, in order to strengthen their colonizing cause and to force the Jewish immigrants to play the role of usurpers, the Zionists cannot confine themselves to agitation and deceit, but are compelled to offer the Jewish workers certain economic benefits. For this purpose the Zionist bourgeoisie, together with the traitorous Poalei Zion party, have organized the Jewish Workers' Organization, Histadrut, whose task it is to insure the Jewish workers a privileged status in the labor market in return for including them in a "nation-wide" front. The Jewish bourgeoisie, through the so-called "National" Fund and the Histadrut, creates, in the first place, a whole net of agricultural "posts," strategically located in such a way as to facilitate the gradual seizure of the entire country.

The Jewish colonist is by no means "an oppressed peasant" – compared with the Arabs, he occupies the position of a farmer: on the average, the

basic capital of the Jewish peasant (per capita) in Palestine amounts in Zionist colonies to £1,000, whereas the basic capital of the fellah (together with the family) amounts to from £20 to £30. The land is bought by Zionist societies and is the property of the Jewish bourgeoisie, government clerks, etc. Often the Jewish farmer or member of a Zionist agricultural "commune," of course, is essentially a poor man; however, as compared with the Arab fellah, he is in a privileged class, which receives from the bourgeoisie, schools and hospitals and which, therefore, constitutes a solid support for the Jewish bourgeoisie against the Arab toilers.

Only in those cases in which the Zionist bourgeoisie is not in a position to fulfill its obligations and the living standards of the Jewish colonists decline sharply, the Jewish colonists are forced either "to desert" the imperialist front, that is, to emigrate, or to go over to the revolutionary camp. Conflicts between Jewish workers and Jewish capitalists are one of the most important levers of the revolutionary movement, and they cause the Jewish proletariat to join the front of anti-imperialist struggle. The privileges of the Jewish workers, even after they have abandoned the stage of "tutelage," and become hired laborers, are expressed as follows: (1) preference in obtaining work in Jewish enterprises (at the huge "Nasher" enterprise, electric power stations, etc.), (2) higher wages, as compared with the Arabs, (3) a number of special institutions, which are closed to Arab workers, as, for instance, a factory hospital fund, (4) better working conditions, a shorter working day, etc.

But in proportion to Zionist expansion these privileges are gradually disappearing. There is a trend toward a decline in the wages of Jewish workers, which, although they remain much higher than those of Arab workers, are gradually being equalized. On this ground, conflicts arise between the Jewish workers and the bourgeoisie. The Jewish workers, especially see clearly the instability of their privileges, when they are compelled to enter into an outright struggle against a capitalist of their own nationality (the colonist manufacturer) or be thrown out in the street by him (unemployment).

*Table A.5* Average wages of Arab and Jewish workers, based upon 1929 government statistics (in mills per day)<sup>7</sup>

<i>Agricultural workers</i>	<i>Jews</i>	<i>Arabs</i>
Skilled	250–350	150–250
Unskilled	175–220	80–120
Women	150–210	50–100
Children		50– 80
<b>Industrial and construction workers</b>		
1st category	350–700	350–700
2nd category	250–360	200–300
Unskilled	200–300	100–160

6 The process of stratification *within* the Jewish proletariat has become more and more evident in recent years. In big enterprises, there is being created a group of privileged workers, who form a stratum of Jewish “working aristocracy.” These are workers in enterprises (Rutenberg, Histadrut Cooperatives, etc.). In contrast to them is the mass of unskilled labor, often unemployed, starving, and the most exploited. To the working aristocracy also belongs a part of the “oriental” workers (Georgian, Bokharan, and other Jews, who work in the colonies and at government enterprises).

7 Besides the Histadrut, various Zionist parties, ranging from avowed Fascists to rightist and “leftist” Social Fascists, play no insignificant role in enslaving the Jewish workers. In spite of the fact that they are composed of petite bourgeoisie, they actually express in the most glaring fashion the great-power strivings of the Jewish bourgeoisie.

The rightist Social Fascists (*mifalaga meuhedet*), who express the interests of the most privileged strata of the Jewish working class, and who carry on, in practice, the most brutal anti-Arab colonizing activity (*kibush adama, kibush avoda*), are the most loyal agents of the imperialist and Jewish bourgeoisie among the Jewish workers. They are being protected with leftist phrases by the “leftist” Social Fascists (Poalei Zion), who juggle Marxist phraseology, but in reality constitute the main obstacle to the masses of Jewish workers going over into the camp of real class struggle against the bourgeoisie (manufacturers, Zionist organizations, and colonists), into the camp of the national and social liberation movement of the Arab masses.

## Appendix 5

# **“Manifesto of the Communist and Workers’ Parties of the Arab Countries”\***

*For the creation of an effective progressive patriotic front of the Arab world to fight against imperialism, Zionism and reaction, to thwart the capitulatory plans, to liberate the territories occupied by Israel, to ensure the legitimate rights of the Arab people of Palestine, to consolidate independence, for democracy and social progress:*

It is being increasingly confirmed today that our epoch is the epoch of transition from capitalism to socialism. The balance of world forces is continually changing in favour of peace, liberation, democracy and socialism.

This is demonstrated by the strengthening of the power of the Soviet Union and the countries of the socialist camp, in economic, political and military fields, and in the strengthening of the relationship between them, in the continuous need for struggle in order to consolidate the pillars of peaceful co-existence between states with different social systems, and in the intensification of the struggle to stabilise the detente and enlarge its circle to include military detente and comprehensive disarmament.

It is also shown by the strengthening of the role of the international patriotic liberation movements, for the sake of the common struggle against imperialism; and it is reflected in the attitude taken by some countries against capitalism, and in the enhancement of their relations with the socialist countries; it is apparent in the increase of their positive role in the revolutionary process. The role of the developing countries, namely the liberated ones, is increasing in the formulation of international policy, of the United Nations, the Non-Alignment Movement, and in the Organisation of African Unity. It is also shown in the expansion and socio-economic transformation in some of the countries of the patriotic liberation movement, after the termination of the colonial regimes.

It is illustrated by the increasing crisis of the international capitalist regimes where the advanced capitalist countries witness a continual crisis in the political, economic and ideological fields; it is reflected in the

\* Complete text (April, 1978).

contradictions emerging between the imperialist countries and their monopolies, and in the increasing struggle of the labour movement and the expansion of the roles and influence of the Communist parties.

The international imperialist and capitalist regimes which lost historical initiative in defining trends of international development, still possess the capacity to obstruct the progress of nations and to disrupt the international situation. Therefore, international imperialism is becoming more evil, and its conspiratory role is increasingly expanding against the forces of peace, freedom and socialism in the world. In order to achieve its goals it has employed modern and sophisticated techniques. Having succeeded in its attempts at direct interference in the internal affairs of other nations, it has now proceeded to rely on the activities of the local reactionary regimes which it uses as a weapon not only in the suppression of the progressive movements in the various regions of the world but also as a basis for reactionary conspiracies. This type of involvement occurred especially in the wake of the new American administration; which has once more returned to the policy of the Cold War and dislodgement of the international situation, to the intensification of the arms race and the production and development of modern arms, for example, the Neutron bomb, as well as continuous efforts in the strengthening of military pacts, especially NATO. It is also trying to establish new types of military bases and pacts, for instance the early alarm bases in the Sinai and the Arabian Gulf Security Pact and Red Sea Security Pact.

Economic involvement, particularly in the energy area, is playing a prominent role in stabilising and regaining imperialist bases, for the international agency which is controlled by American petroleum monopolies is exerting a great influence on undermining the results achieved by petroleum nationalisation. This policy is clearly reflected in the efforts that have been made by the American petroleum monopolies to obstruct the marketing of nationalised petroleum as well as to impede the development of the associated petroleum industry. American imperialism and international petroleum monopolies are becoming more active in order to increase their influence in the Middle East and also in causing a rift within OPEC, thereby guaranteeing continuous and permanent access to petroleum at prices appropriate to their interests. They attempt to achieve cooperation with the reactionary petroleum exporting countries in the Middle East.

Imperialism, especially in recent years, has stepped up its activity in the ideological sphere, particularly by fomenting nationalist sentiments, setting people and various forces against each other, inciting religious and communal discord, spreading anti-communism and anti-Sovietism, resorting to subversion of and attempting to split the national liberation movement. Undoubtedly, Carter's proclaimed "human rights" slogan is only a ploy for spreading the campaign against socialism and to hamper the process of detente. By dividing the world into the "poor and the rich",

“North and South”, imperialism and Maoism pursue the aim of slandering the socialist system and eroding its relations with the national liberation movement.

Contingents of the Communist movement highly assess the role of the CPSU – the glorious party of Lenin, the outstanding achievements of the Great October Socialist Revolution. The new Constitution of the USSR reflects the enormous and inspiring successes achieved by the peoples of the Soviet Union in building mature socialism and in deepening socialist democracy, in advancing towards Communism and in the struggle for a stable universal peace.

### **A larger role for the international Communist movement**

World developments confirm the decisive role played by the world Communist movement and its successes in the struggle for peace, freedom, democracy and socialism. Today the role of the Communist parties in the world is increasing and the movement’s influence is expanding in making every effort to strengthen the unity of the Communist movement on the principles of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism. This unity is a crucial factor in fulfilling the movement’s objectives. It is essential to safeguard the purity of its theory, to wage a struggle against any attempts at its distortion, to rebuff all attacks on the experience of building real socialism, from wherever may come.

The present Chinese leadership is following the former Maoist policy, proceeding, both at the state and party level, from the policy of hostility towards the Soviet Union and the world Communist movement, intensifying international tension, supporting imperialism’s attempts to return to the cold-war policy, encouraging imperialist military blocs and subversion of the national liberation movements on various continents. This was demonstrated by the Chinese attitudes to the developments in the Sudan, to the fascist coup d’état in Chile, and to the events which took place in Angola, Ethiopia and so on. The Chinese leadership also encouraged Sadat’s initiative along with the activities of the reactionary rulers of the Middle East. The Chinese leadership rejected all the principled and sincere efforts of the Soviet Union, including its recent initiative to normalise relations between the two countries on the principles of peaceful coexistence and good-neighbourliness.

The Communist and Workers’ parties of the Arab countries reaffirm their condemnation of this anti-Marxist policy that runs counter to the peoples’ aspirations to freedom, independence, progress, peace and socialism, serving only the interests of imperialism and its puppets in various countries. They appeal to the Chinese leadership to renounce this course, which is inflicting enormous harm on the interests of the Chinese people themselves and the interests of their further development and to respond to the Soviet initiative to normalise relations between the two states.



Recently, socialist Vietnam has been subjected to dangerous provocation on her borders with Kampuchea, which was aimed at distracting Vietnam from dealing with the consequences of the liberation war and at preventing her from consolidating her unity and progress on the road to socialism. It also aimed at preventing Vietnam from exercising her positive influence as a major revolutionary power in South East Asia as well as on the rest of the world. But Vietnam has dealt with that conflict by showing her readiness to seek a peaceful solution through negotiation and not through the application of power. Vietnam's attitude has gained wide support from the national and progressive Arab circles.

The Arab national liberation movement has won substantial successes in the course of its struggle, as witnessed by the gaining of political independence, the establishment of progressive patriotic regimes in a number of Arab countries, by many political, economic and social gains that serve as the basis for moving forward along the road of economic justice and the gradual elimination of dependence on the world capitalist market. The Arab national liberation movement, which is a part of the international revolutionary patriotic movement, is playing a prominent military role as demonstrated by the strengthening of its militant role against imperialism and its basis and influence in the area; it is also demonstrated by its support of the nation's struggle for freedom and independence.

***The Arab national liberation movement is enriched by deep progressive concepts***

Throughout that long struggle so many Arab reactionary régimes fell as a result of their adherence to imperialism and Zionism; their attempts to strangle mass movement and their betrayal of the Arab Palestinian people's cause. During that struggle the representatives of the national and progressive circles have come to power and supported slogans of socio-economic progress and unity. Accordingly, the Arab national liberation movement has been enriched with deep progressive socio-economic and political, as well as intellectual concepts. However, all these concepts are related to the position of the social forces where the labouring class, along with the working masses and the revolutionary intelligentsia, and many other elements from the petit-bourgeoisie in both town and city have begun to play a more active part in the current developmental process. Furthermore, during that period, the organic inter-relationship between the national and patriotic struggle has increased. It also became obvious that socio-economic development has become more inter-related with the struggle against imperialism and its reactionary monopolies on one side and more concerned with developing mutual relations with the socialist countries on the other. In fact, the change which has taken place in the position of class powers has been reflected in the increased role of the parties and revolutionary

powers including our Labour and Communist parties of the Arab countries; it has also been reflected in its increasing intellectual influence, the widespread influence of scientific socialist thoughts and the adaptation of socialist thought by some of the circles of the Arab national liberation movements, strengthening the cooperation between Arab Labour and Communist parties along with the Communist parties of the Soviet Union, as well as the other parties of the socialist countries.

The Arab national liberation movement has achieved these goals through large-scale struggles that have taken place throughout the years. Those struggles, however, have been undertaken by the political, patriotic and progressive forces, whether Communist, democratic, revolutionary or progressive, and have represented all trends. It has also relied on the support given by the working masses. All this has taken place for many reasons – the positive potentials of the international situation, the change that has taken place in favour of socialism, the good relationship existing among the various groups of the Arab national liberation movements and also the good relations between the progressive and patriotic regimes and the socialist countries along with the different progressive powers of the world.

The present stage of the Arab national liberation movement is essentially a stage of national democratic revolution, which is proceeding in new circumstances, where the objectives of national liberation and social progress converge and their solution becomes increasingly vital and complex in view of the aggravation of the class struggle.

An important feature of the present stage is the deep-rooted process of political and class differentiation in the Arab national liberation movement. Certain forces seek to block the movement's further development in solving general national problems, as well as in the social and economic spheres. This poses a threat to the Arab liberation movement, for ceasing the struggle is tantamount to retreat. There are forces, moreover, that are abandoning the Arab liberation movement and inasmuch as their interests coincide with those of neocolonialism, are adopting a hostile stance towards the movement. On the other hand, there are forces seeking to deepen the development of this movement, invigorate its national anti-imperialist aspects, and deepen its economic and social content while relying on the popular masses and their enhanced activity. That is the goal of the working class, peasantry and working people in general, the Communist and workers' parties of the Arab countries, the revolutionary democratic circles and movements.

The process of differentiation varies depending on development levels and objectives facing the country concerned. It grows deeper with the sharpening of the class battles around the issue of the prospects of socio-economic development, and with the intensification of the struggle against imperialism and reaction.

The major achievements of the Arab national liberation movement in the political, economic and social spheres, the deepening of its patriotic

and progressive content and the expansion of its ties with the world revolutionary movement, have led to the activation and military expansion of the forces of imperialism, Zionism and reaction. These forces resort to ever more varied and brutal methods and rely increasingly on the reactionary and ultra-right forces in the region of planning and carrying out this offensive, which is aimed at restoring full American control and domination over the Arab world, a major economic and oil-producing centre, with great strategic significance. American imperial assault in the area is part of a comprehensive imperial strategy which is embodied in a variety of imperial activities in different parts of the world and manifested in certain prominent characteristics such as American imperialist attempts (after ten years of imperialist Zionist aggression on the Arab countries) to impose submissive settlements in order to control the whole area.

Within the present international situation of the balance of power (which is limiting direct imperialist influence in the area to achieve its goals and ensure its continuity) American imperialism is seeking to create a new situation through which it can guarantee its continuous control over the area. In order to achieve the goal American imperialism is relying more and more heavily on the rulers of Israel and local reactionary rulers of the Arab countries. It is also making great efforts to establish and expand its military bases and also to revitalise past military pacts such as the Central Treaty Organization whilst, at the same time, creating new ones with different forms and also establishing new types of military installations such as early warning alarm bases.

US imperialism is out to overthrow the progressive national regimes or to bring them under its influence. To this end it uses the stick and carrot method and various forms of subversive actions in these countries, seeking, in particular, to split the unity of the national contingents, to effect economic penetration, to harness the economies of these countries to the chariot of the imperialist monopolies, and to conduct subversive activity in the sphere of culture, information and education.

Imperialism and its allies in the Arab region are out to deal blows at Arab-Soviet friendship and cooperation in the political, economic, cultural and military spheres so that the Arab liberation movement would find itself facing the plots of imperialism, Zionism and reaction without the support of its true and powerful ally, to isolate it from the world revolutionary movement. Imperialism is expanding its campaign against the ideological front and trying to create centres of instability and confrontation among the Arab countries and to encourage Arab progressive forces to fight with each other at both regional and national levels. It also aims to disseminate sectarian and/or religious fanaticism.

Sadat's visit to Israel and his capitulatory course, which represents an open challenge to the national and patriotic sentiments of the Arab peoples, was the culmination of the retreat in the political, economic and social spheres that has been in evidence in Egypt over the recent period. The main

purpose of Sadat's visit, along with a series of activities related to it, has been to stifle the military and political power of Egypt and to divert the Arab countries from the path of struggle against imperialism and occupation into bases of alliance with the forces of imperialism. The aim is to undermine the efficiency of the Arab African liberation movement. Nonetheless, the main result of Sadat's new activities is to weaken the chances of bringing about a just peace in the area and also to contribute towards the increased arrogance of Israeli rulers, encouraging them to continue their expansionist ambitions. However, Israel's negative attitude is demonstrated by its constant declarations not to withdraw from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, expanding its policy of establishing more settlements in the pan-occupied territories including Sinai, total and absolute rejection of the just rights of the Arab people of Palestine and by the evil aggression in South Lebanon and its ultimate occupation.

At the same time as the Egyptian regime stands invalid and submissive in front of the increasing aggression of Israel, which is enjoying the continuous support of American imperialism, Egypt is directing its efforts towards confronting and eliminating the progressive and patriotic movements and regimes whether in the Arab area or in the African countries and it is also creating conflicts and problems in these areas.

Settlement of the Middle East crisis is the key link in the struggle waged by the Arab national liberation movement against imperialism, Zionism and reaction, for economic and social progress.

As before, this struggle is developing between two basic tendencies, between national liberation and the reactionary, pro-imperialist, capitulatory trends. The national liberation trend places the emphasis on an overall settlement of the Middle East problem on the basis of full liberation of the occupied territories, ensuring the legitimate rights of the Arab people of Palestine, including the right to return to their home and to set up an independent state on the West Bank of the Jordan and in the Gaza Strip. This trend holds that a just and stable Middle East peace can only be reached on such a basis, through persistent struggle against imperialism and by strengthening the alliance with the USSR and other forces of progress and liberation throughout the world while using various means, opportunities and methods of struggle. But the reactionary imperialist trend is based on the principle of non-adherence to the goal of the liberation of all the occupied Arab territories and in the prevention of the Arab Peoples of Palestine from deciding their destiny; it is also based on the refusal to recognise the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinians, the pursuit of partial and individual settlement concerning Palestinian issues and finally on the dissemination of a submissive spirit. It is a fact, that the USA is not satisfied with arming Israel and granting her all sorts of assistance, but it is also trying to force the Arab countries to follow Sadat's example and to accept the submissive settlements by various coercive means, whether military or economic.

The latest events in Lebanon have represented one of the most dangerous conspiratorial circles and a solid base for confrontation against imperialism. Nevertheless the danger of Israel's aggression against Lebanon has contributed to the strengthening of the unity of the Lebanese patriotic movement based on progressive principles, and to its increasing reliance on mass support. It has also strengthened the cohesion of the Lebanese patriotic movement with the Palestinian resistance movement, ultimately raising the level of the patriotic struggle against reactionary Zionist imperialist conspiracy.

During the drafting and signing of the Sinai agreement an armed struggle broke out in Lebanon, launched by the forces of international reaction in fulfilment of the plans of imperialism, reaction and Zionism. In the conditions resulting from Sadat's visit to Israel and the failure of his capitulatory line, as well as the continuing US-Zionist plot, the struggle broke out anew in Lebanon, and the extensive Israeli aggression in the south of Lebanon rendered it even more dangerous. Israeli aggression against Lebanon, was not only an attempt to occupy part of Lebanese territory but also aimed at undermining the Palestinian resistance movement, eliminating Palestinian existence, crushing the Lebanese patriotic movement and exposing Syrian integrity to danger thereby obliging her to retreat from the policy of opposing Sadat's capitulatory settlement. It was also intended to weaken the rejectionist front by giving a hand to the Zionist and isolationists' attempts. That aggression was also aimed at the elimination of the Arab national identity from Lebanon, coercing it to succumb to the reactionary, fascist, sectarian powers. It was further aimed at the creation of a sectarian entity on part of Lebanon's territory.

The solution of the key national task at this stage requires the overcoming of contradictions and narrow interests and the establishment of relations of close cooperation between Syria, the Palestine resistance movement and the national movement in Lebanon, with the aim of banishing the Israeli occupationists from southern Lebanon, of thwarting the Zionists' plans and of solving the Lebanese crisis on the basis of ensuring the country's independence and Arab character, as well as safeguarding the forces of the Palestine revolution.

The Palestine resistance movement occupies an important place in the ranks of the Arab national liberation movement as a key contingent in the struggle being waged in the region against imperialism, Zionism and reaction and in obstructing the implementation of subversive plans. It is also a key element in flying the banner of struggle for a right and just cause, that is, the Arab Palestinian cause. Because of that, the PLO and the resistance movement is subjected to military attacks from Israel and the isolationist elements in Lebanon. It is subjected to continuous acts of oppression and aggression and attempts to control it and to limit its independence. These moves are all intended to take a stranglehold on the revolutionary inclination of the Palestinian resistance movement in order to divide it and create an alternative.

But all these attacks and coercive measures will be defeated in the face of the heroism and consciousness of the patriotic forces and the Palestinian masses; they will be overcome in the face of the continuous cohesion of the Palestinian movement with the forces of the Arab liberation movements. They will also be defeated with the help and international support of the forces of peace, of progress and socialism, namely from the Soviet Union.

Within this framework of struggle, the Palestinian masses inside the occupied territories are waging a continuous battle against the occupation and Sadat's submissive settlement policy, and against all the plans aimed at abrogating the rights of the Arab masses of Palestine and undermining the role of the PLO as its sole legal representative.

The sequence of events in the Middle East throughout the past three decades has proved that no genuine peace can be achieved in the area without recognition of the patriotic rights of more than 3 million Palestinians.

The Gulf area and the Arab peninsula have become the focus of increasing interest by the imperialists, namely the Americans, in their plans directed against the Arab nations and their liberation movements. This has come about because this area is the largest source of production and export of oil petroleum of which its territories have an immense reserve. It is also an important sea route for marketing the oil, while in addition the area enjoys an important strategic position which has an impact on the economy of international capitalism.

The economic importance of the area is increasing and coincides with the emergence of an energy crisis and inflationary phenomena which are used to lessen the monetary crisis in the capitalist countries; it also comes at a time when there are continuous efforts being made to control the patriotic regimes and encourage the provision for heavy armament against patriotic Arab and African liberation movements.

The imperialist plans in the area are increasingly based on the establishment of many permanent and temporary military bases and the infiltration of thousands of military experts especially in the oilfields. The aim of this policy is to secure the total occupation of the area through the creation of armed bases for total destruction and means of communication. The aim is also to support the reactionary regime in the confiscation of common liberties such as in the cases of Bahrain and Kuwait and also to direct a blow at the Oman people. These imperialist plans are also intended to create political and military alliances such as the Gulf Security Programme and Red Sea security with the aim of increasing Zionist and imperialist domination in the sea routes of the area.

In the Western part of the Arab world the elements of unrest are increasing, yet the causes of these conflicts in that part of the world are simple, they can be solved through peaceful and political means by negotiation. These problems can be solved in such a way as to serve the interests of all those who live in that area. Obviously, the continuing instability in the Western part of the Arab world works in favour of the imperialists.

Thus the French imperialists have begun to threaten the area with interference and collaboration with American imperialism. Naturally this would endanger the progress and patriotic achievements of the nations in this area, namely Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania.

The Communist and workers' parties of the Arab countries consider that a firm unity of interests and common aims unite the Arab and African peoples, who in varying forms are together countering the aggressive policy of imperialism and reaction.

The events of the Horn of Africa represent a dangerous plot against the African and Arab liberation movement, particularly against the revolutionary regimes in Ethiopia and Democratic Yemen. The Somali leadership has aided these plans and violated the decisions of the Organisation of African Unity concerning recognition of the existing borders of the African States and settlement of border issues by peaceful means. The Somali government has also, to the advice given, invaded the territory of Ethiopia. Naturally in so doing it has exposed Somali's national independence and the Somali people's achievements to grave danger.

The highest interests of the Arab national liberation movement require that these plans must be frustrated and that an end must be put to imperialist and reactionary interference. The Ethiopian revolution must be protected, and the Eritrean problem solved by peaceful means on the basis of self-determination of the people, in accordance with the common military interests against reaction and imperialism.

Experience has taught us that depending on reactionary movements and imperialism would endanger patriotic independence and crush progressive achievements. Therefore, the revolutionary leadership which is heavily reliant on a deep and comprehensive mass support, inspired by revolutionary thought and assisted by the Soviet Union and other socialist forces, along with other progressive forces in the world, should secure victory. The continuous support offered by Cuba to the struggle of the Ethiopian peoples and other African nations represents a good example of international military solidarity.

Some of the Arab reactionary regimes which are supported by imperialism have always cooperated and formulated common plans with Zionism and the rulers of Israel. But what is the most unendurable thing in that cooperation is that it has now become more open and obvious, that the rulers of Egypt have joined it having deserted the struggle against Israeli occupation.

### *A continuous role of retrogression and submission*

The imperialist offensive would have been less effective and the true face of Arab reaction less pronounced had not a number of negative aspects that have emerged in the recent period, prejudiced the Arab national liberation movement. Those negative aspects are represented in a continuous inclination inside certain elements of the Arab patriotic liberation movements

towards following a more lenient policy with local reactionary rulers and imperialism, and also in the estrangement of other patriotic elements from the patriotic camp in order to join the opposite side.

Within that framework the intruding bourgeoisie has played an increasing role in accelerating the trends of retrogression and capitulation, and in the pursuit of economic liberalisation. That social strata is developing and becoming stronger in collaboration with the state sector, state system, commerce and tender sector. Naturally, in circumstances where mass supervision and vigilance are non-existent, the social strata (the intruding bourgeoisie) would become a more dangerous force.

This social stratum would also develop attitudes contrary to the national liberation aspiration and against the patriotic interests of the people. This will be achieved over a period of time because it is not participating in the process of social activity. Therefore it will regard itself as nearer to the interests of reaction, Zionism and imperialism. Hence it is not strange to discover that this phenomenon has already begun to appear in one form or another in some of the progressive countries. This phenomenon necessitates complete vigilance and adherence to a policy of resistance by force. It has become very clear in recent years the extent to which that phenomenon is dangerous to the working masses and the frameworks within which they work, for instance political organisations, unions and democratic organisations, and in the restriction of the liberties of the people.

It is essential to consistently follow a line of relying on the support of the masses, to provide conditions for the manifestation of their creative energies and initiatives, and to ensure democratic freedoms, above all, the freedom to set up political and trade union organisations, freedom of expression and the press. Failing this, it will be impossible to defend and develop the progressive gains, counter the plots of imperialism, Zionism and reaction and safeguard national independence and sovereignty.

### ***In circumstances of fulfilling democratic liberties and guaranteeing mass participation***

The masses of labourers, peasants and revolutionary intelligentsia which form the comprehensive, social and patriotic militant foundations should participate actively in determining their country's destiny. All this depends to a great extent on the realisation of democratic liberties and mass participation in the progressive and patriotic battles.

It is obvious that the negligence of mass demands has been an important factor for the progressive regimes in weakening their countries, for as long as the social transformations are deep, equal and responsive to mass demands, then the mass of labourers, peasants and intelligentsia will play an active role in the battle of construction and liberation. But these conditions would only be created when public institutions became free of destructive elements, when revolutionary institutions based on democratic



principles were established and when, in the fight against bureaucracy complete reliance was placed on the popular supervision of the state institutions as well as on other services and production sectors.

In the face of the expanding onslaught of imperialism, Zionism and reaction, it is imperative to ensure the active participation of the broadest social strata in defending and developing progressive gains, safeguarding national sovereignty and in rebuffing the plotting of imperialism, Zionism and reaction.

The struggle against the economic offensive of internationally organised monopolies, against the policy of "economic liberalisation" propagandised by the reactionary circles in the Arab world, plays an important part in organising a rebuff to imperialist pressures. It is essential to display vigilance and not to permit subordination of economic and trade relations to the world capitalist market, to step up the struggle against the plunder of national wealth, above all of oil, and to make sure that the oil revenues are not used to alleviate the crisis of world capitalism, to subvert the Arab and African progressive patriotic regimes, and establish domination over other countries of the region.

In countering the imperialist onslaught vital importance is attached to the struggle in defence of the state sector, to its expansion and improved management, to averting the efforts of the hostile elements aimed at undermining it and to deepening the socio-economic changes in various fields.

In this connection the importance of strengthening economic and commercial cooperation with the states of the socialist community as a way of achieving economic independence and resolving the objectives of economic development, is becoming increasingly clear. It is possible to resist and curb this vicious imperialist assault. To achieve this goal the Arab patriotic liberation movement possesses all the military, economic and political potential. For the Arab masses have already undertaken courageous battles against imperialism and for liberation and social progress. Those battles have benefited the Arab masses and their political and progressive vanguards as well as their popular organisations, in becoming more experienced and victorious.

### ***The factors leading to the defeat of the imperialist conspiracy***

There are certain factors which make the possibility of defeating imperialist conspiracy easy for the following reasons:

- 1 The existence of progressive and patriotic regimes antagonistic to imperialism, with power and ability to take the initiative of leadership from the forces of right and Arab reactionary elements.
- 2 The existence of political organisations and revolutionary movements, particularly working-class parties, which are capable of mobilising the popular masses in times of decisive battles.

- 3 The solidarity of the Soviet Union, the socialist countries and the forces of progress in the world with the Arab patriotic liberation movement.
- 4 The emergence of an international situation at a time when the balance of power is becoming more in favour of socialist countries, while the crisis of international imperialism is increasing and becoming more detrimental.

The political, economic and popular potentials of the Arab patriotic liberation movement can confront the recent developments of the Arab situation and can also confront the vicious imperialist assault, if they are well organised; the widely popular official reactions against Sadat's initiative has proved the existence of such a possibility. The popular reawakening of these attitudes has begun to crystallise and has become more active against submissive attitudes, capitulation and imperialism. All this has been reflected in the demonstration of the masses and acts of mass denunciation of Sadat's initiative in various Arab countries and even in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The masses of Palestine have thus proved their loyalty to the PLO and their rejection of occupation and submission. The progressive and patriotic forces of Egypt are playing a bold and prominent role against the Sadat treachery to the Arab cause.

The popular masses in the Arab countries hail the formation of a front of staunchness and resistance as a major gain in the struggle against the onslaught of imperialism and Zionism, for thwarting the capitulatory policy. The results of the Tripoli summit and the People's Congress represent an important step in that direction. These results were consolidated and developed at the summit meeting in Algiers. A statement adopted at this meeting emphasises the need to wage a resolute struggle against imperialism and Zionism, against the course followed by the Egyptian regime, to strengthen friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union and all forces of progress and socialism across the world.

### ***The significant steps on the road to a progressive and patriotic Arab front***

The Arab progressive and patriotic forces together with all forces of progress, freedom and socialism in the world proclaimed the results at both the Tripoli and Algiers summit conferences and saw in them a significant step towards the development of Arab solidarity and as a step directed against Sadat's submissive policy. These conferences represent important developments on the road to establishing Arab progressive and patriotic front. No doubt this front will be strengthened and become more powerful if Iraq participates in it. The political circumstances of the area and its geographical location has denoted the significance of such a front which should include Iraq, Syria and the PLO. What is required now above all is the intensification and consolidation of the results of Tripoli's and

Algiers' summit conferences and the exertion of all possible efforts to establish a militant programme for confrontation which all the Arab patriotic regimes would support. It is also most important to guarantee the participation of the representatives of all the progressive and patriotic trends in the activities of the general trustee for the Arab Popular Conference by mobilising all potentials in every Arab gathering against Zionism and imperialism.

It is becoming more obvious throughout the struggle against imperialism and its allies and conspiracies, that the Arab masses are trying to achieve a wider Arab progressive front to lead its united fight against the common enemy. This is in order to curb all the attempts which aim at drowning the slogans of Arab militant solidarity. The Arab masses are also trying to create that front among the progressive and patriotic powers in their fight against imperialist assault. That front also aims at confronting the Arab reactionary regimes which are trying to follow calls for Arab solidarity in order to distract the attention of the Arab masses from the struggle against imperialist activities, Zionism and reactionary regimes that are always conspiring against their just national cause. This popular desire of unity of action and struggle is connected with the legitimate desire for Arab unity which must be founded on the principles of continuous antagonism against imperialism and determination for consistent action on the road to social progress, through complete reliance on a wider base of the masses, through the realisation of democratic liberties by means of political organisations and professional unions and freedom of expression. That desire is also related to the wish for continuous cooperation with socialist countries and the revolutionary democratic forces of the world. Hence the intensification of the potentials of the Arab confrontationist countries (including the PLO) against Israel is imperative.

***Consolidation of independence and its protection through co-operation and friendship with the socialist countries***

Since the Arab states began to achieve independence and fight for its protection and consolidation, the experiment of modern history has demonstrated that such an aim would be impossible without the cooperation and friendship of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries on a frank and sincere basis.

The armies of Syria have fought alongside the advanced Soviet technical armies since 1956 but the Egyptian regime today is trying to deviate from that policy and has begun to seek a new source of arms. Unfortunately, this tendency is enjoying the moral and financial support of the Arab reactionary regimes, such as Saudi Arabia. However, Sadat's inclination to disarm the Egyptian army is in line with the submissive policy he is following in all fields. But on the other hand it has become obvious through experience that imperialism is not the real source of armament to the Arab countries,

including Egypt, as some of the Arab countries aim to liberate the occupied territories one day.

The slogan of “looking for new sources of arms” is a dangerous one, which aims at directing a harmful blow against the progress of Arab countries, especially against the aggressive countries in order gradually to subjugate them to reactionist and imperialist control.

In fact, improvement and increase of the fighting potentials of progressive Arab armies and the proper application of modern fighting techniques is beginning to play a prominent part in the present situation, as the accumulation of arms themselves is insufficient without the required technical knowledge of their use.

### ***Life has proved the necessity of the progressive and patriotic fronts***

The progressive and patriotic fronts which are formed in certain Arab countries have proved to be necessary. They have embraced progressive and patriotic parties, including the communist parties. This has reflected an objective reality. The cooperation within the framework of these fronts has achieved success in political and socio-economic fields and has also played a prominent role in mobilising the masses in their fight against imperialism and its allies.

Life has confirmed the need for the patriotic and progressive fronts that have been set up in a number of Arab countries. They consist of national and progressive parties, including the Communists, which reflects objective reality. Cooperation in the framework of these fronts has ensured successes in the political, economic and social spheres. They had a role to play in mobilising the masses for the struggle against imperialism and its henchmen.

### ***Vital objectives of the struggle***

The programme of struggle against imperialism, Zionism and reaction, to thwart the capitulatory course, for the liberation of the occupied Arab territories and to ensure the national rights of the Arab people of Palestine presupposes the implementation of the following objectives:

- 1 Formation of a broad progressive patriotic front on the scale of the entire Arab world, comprising all progressive patriotic forces and streams, built on the basis of a realistic concrete fighting programme and leading to the expansion and cohesion of the base of staunchness and resistance, with the aim of effecting the necessary changes in the situation of the Arab national liberation movement and at raising it to the level of the tasks of the present stage while simultaneously developing and strengthening Arab solidarity in the name of launching a joint struggle against the overall plans of imperialism.

- 2 Defence of the progressive patriotic regimes against attempts to overthrow or subvert them, enhancement of their role in the struggle against imperialism, Zionism and reaction.
- 3 Strengthening the front of staunchness and resistance, by eliminating all its weak points, enabling it to counter the increasingly serious attacks, to resolutely reject the capitulatory course of Sadat, while following a consistent line of struggle against imperialism, US imperialism first of all, Zionism and reaction, and rebuffing their various plans and manoeuvres in the region.
- 4 Creation of political, material and military prerequisites to ensure the staunchness of the Syrian front in face of the Zionist enemy, formation of close fighting relations between Syria, the Palestine resistance movement and the progressive patriotic movement in Lebanon.
- 5 Full political, material and military support to the forces of the Palestine revolution on the basis of safeguarding their independence in adopting political decisions expressing the independent national identity of the Arab people of Palestine, which will help to maintain and strengthen their present potential in the struggle for the right of the Arab people of Palestine to return to their home, for self-determination, setting up an independent national state and to full restoration of their legitimate national rights, in the struggle conducted under the leadership of the Palestine Liberation Organisation as the sole legitimate representative of that people.
- 6 Support for the struggle of the Lebanese national movement and all forces seeking to safeguard the unity and Arab character of Lebanon, against Israeli aggression and for the unconditional banishing of the occupationists from the southern regions of the country, against the isolationist Zionist plans that are designed to deprive Lebanon of its Arab identity and to turn it into a racist communal formation.
- 7 Support for the national democratic movement in Egypt in its struggle against Sadat's line, so that Egypt can once again take its natural position in the Arab front of struggle against imperialism and the Israeli occupation.
- 8 Intensified struggle to thwart the plans to set up new military blocs and to dismantle the military bases in the region of the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula which serve aggressive purposes, for the withdrawal of foreign troops and to maintain the independence of the states of this region, to ensure freedom of navigation in accordance with the rules of international law.
- 9 Ensurance of the broadest democratic freedoms for the masses, the popular movements and progressive forces to display their initiatives, renunciation of any manifestations or forms of restricting the activity of these forces, abrogation of the repressive anti-Communist laws still in force in a number of Arab countries.

- 10 Enhancement of the effectiveness of the national fronts and alliances, enrichment of the content of their activity, and increasing the role and activity of their participants, as well as the role of the mass popular organisations for the maximum and more effective mobilisation of forces and opportunities in the face of the intensified imperialist, Zionist and reactionary plots.
- 11 Deepening of the democratic socio-economic transformations, strengthening economic independence, satisfaction of the demands of the popular masses, consolidation of their role in resolving the fate of their country with the aim of ensuring a stable material foundation and mass base for the struggle against the alliance of imperialism, Zionism and reaction.
- 12 Steadfast strengthening of friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union in all spheres in the interests of the struggle against imperialism, Zionism and the capitulators, in the interests of the development and progress of our peoples.
- 13 Promotion of relations of cooperation and solidarity with the revolutionary movements and regimes in Africa, support for their struggle against the plots of imperialism and reaction, for the just struggle being waged by the peoples of South Africa, Zimbabwe and Namibia and their revolutionary organisations against racial discrimination and for national liberation.
- 14 Invigoration of the struggle to consolidate the unity of the world Communist movement on the principles of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism.
- 15 Invigoration of the struggle against all anti-Communist and anti-Soviet trends and tendencies.

Jordanian Communist Party  
Socialist Vanguard Party of Algeria  
Sudanese Communist Party  
Iraqi Communist Party  
Lebanese Communist Party  
Party of Progress and Socialism of Morocco  
Egyptian Communist Party  
Mid-April, 1978

## Appendix 6

# **“The Social Revolution and the East”\***

*M. Sultan-Galiev*

The social revolution in Russia is only a beginning, one of the stages of the worldwide international social revolution. Sooner or later, it must take the form of revolutionary strife, of a desperate and decisive skirmish between two irreconcilable enemies, two opposing and contradictory forces, the international proletariat and international imperialism. The frontiers and territory springing at the moment from the civil war within the boundaries of the former Russian monarchy must expand and become intensified, both in their internal maintenance and in their external manifestations. Gradually, with the development of the revolution, entire peoples and countries will be drawn and must be drawn beyond their own wars, into this war, which appears on the whole to be the last human butchery on the earth's globe. This is inevitable and unavoidable. The old world has already become much too decrepit. It is groaning and falling to the ground. It is cracking in all its rotten joints! All the earth, all its atoms, thirst for and demand renovation, demand that they be transposed to an entirely new harmony. And the decisive moment has come, not only for separate human individuals, but also for entire peoples and governments, as cultural-historical variants, when each of them must define his fate and irrevocably decide on which side of the barrier to place himself. Whether you want to or not, you must take part in it, and consciously or unconsciously, become either “white” or “red.”

That this is so we see as a matter of fact. The October revolution had still not occurred, when labor and capital in Russia, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, as two forces hostile to one another, had already begun to differentiate themselves, had begun to define themselves and to prepare for a decisive struggle with one another.

The October revolution was only a moment of collision between these forces in Russia, when the Russian bourgeoisie beaten on the head in its homeland, was compelled to transfer the concentration of the remainder of its forces to the outskirts of Russia and to the countries of the Entente,

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where, for a more or less short term, it was guaranteed a comparatively free existence.

But from that moment the strife against the revolution which was continuously developing and exhibiting a tendency to become worldwide, acquired an international character. In the campaign against the workers and peasants of Russia conquered by their own bourgeoisie not only the Russian, but also separate units of the international bourgeoisie, are taking part, at first separately and then together. The League of Nations is becoming the central and most organized of their forces, where all the counter-revolutionary forces of the whole earth's sphere come together as in a focal point. It is being transformed into a black International, gathering around itself all that which one way or another can hinder and serve as a barrier to the development of the revolution.

Such are the premises of the general situation, the conditions of the development of the international social revolution at the present. And only proceeding from them can we foresee the forms which its development may take in the future.

One of the problems which our revolution sets before us at the present time in a practical form is the Eastern question. And it is unavoidable that we quickly resolve it. This problem, within the conditions of the contemporary international political situation, presents itself, neither more nor less, as one of the phases of the natural development of the world social revolution. In this consists its inevitability and unavoidability. Even if we did not want to recognize it, and ignored it, it would stand before us anyway in all its internal and external complexity and intricacy. We would be wrong in this case if we limited ourselves only to the superficial solution of the question. It needs a thorough and completely attentive study, not only in its social-economic, but also in its international-political treatment.

We must examine and predetermine all the concrete forms which the development of the East might take in the general of the international class differentiation in that or any event, and with this define once and for all our relations to it, with all the ensuing consequences.

As much as it seems to us that the general course of international policy taken by us in the social revolution is completely right, and in no need of correctives, nevertheless one must be conscious that the question in relation to the East is in need of serious correction. However grievous this is, one must admit that up to this time all the measures which we took in the business of the establishment of correct mutual relations between Soviet Russia and the East were, until recently, too accidental and palliative in character. In this sphere a firm execution of a systematic and confidently decisive policy was completely imperceptible.

At worst it appeared as a reflection and acknowledgement of our own weakness, as, for instance, the recall of Russian troops from Persia, and at best as an expression of sympathy and promise of support to the



revolutionary aspirations of the East as, for example, we made after the uprising in Afghanistan against the English, but no more.

Our actions in this respect begin to take on a more or less definite character only from the moment of the elucidation of the disasters of the social revolution in the West, when the very course of the development of events (defeat of the Spartacists in Germany, the frustration of the general strike of protest against intervention in Russian affairs, and the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic) compelled us, finally, to accept the simple truth that without the participation of the East it impossible for us to accomplish the international social revolution. But at the moment these measures do not yet have that definite and established character which the laws of the correct development of the social revolution demand of them.

The task of the present article is a more or less full analysis of this question.

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The Soviet system, as an expression of communism, is the antipode of the bourgeois-capitalist state. These two systems cannot exist side by side and peacefully keep house together. They can endure one another only temporarily, and endure until such time as there proves to be a preponderance of forces, even if only slight, on one side or the other, which [side] thereupon unavoidably will start an attack on the opposite side at that moment showing itself to be weaker.

By force of the immutable and basic law of the development of the social revolution, the Russian Revolution, from the very first days of its rise, was obliged to develop into a worldwide [revolution]; otherwise the same Soviets in Russia would produce in themselves only a small oasis in the raging sea of imperialism, minutely risking obliteration from the face of the earth by the water-spout of the worldwide imperialist bacchanalia.

The leaders of the October revolution understood this situation perfectly well, and tried to direct it in the current of the international channel. And it could not be otherwise, or the social revolution in Russia would lose all its inner meaning.

But in a tactical sense this process of the development of the revolution was directed in an incorrect way. It appeared correct outwardly in its separate manifestations (the Spartacist movement in Germany, the Hungarian revolution, etc.); in its general totality it had a one-sided character. This one-sidedness consisted in the fact that almost all the attention of the leaders was turned to the West. The accomplishment of the task of the unfolding of the October revolution into an international socialist [one] presented itself to them spontaneously in the mechanical energy of the Russian Revolution in the West, i.e. in that part of the earth's sphere where, as it seemed, the contradictions of the class interests of the proleteriat and the bourgeoisie appear most sharply and boldly, and where for this reason there is a more or less firm ground for the development of class revolution.

But the East, with its population of one and a half billion enslaved by the Western European bourgeoisie, is forgotten. The course of the basic process of the development of international class strife went on, avoiding the East, and the question of the latter, like the question of the “revolutionizing of the East”, existed only in the minds of a separate few, in themselves representing no more than a drop of water in the raging sea of revolution.

The lack of knowledge of the East, on the one hand, and the fear it called forth by this, on the other, made it so that the idea of the participation of the East in the international revolution obviously became profaned.

It is true that the Western states, including here their ally America, appear to be the countries of the concentration of all the material and “moral” forces of international imperialism, and it would seem in this respect, submit to themselves the chief territory where a battle for it must be made from our side – but on the other hand, in no case can we confidently say that there is enough force for the overthrow of the Western bourgeoisie if only due to the circumstance that this bourgeoisie appears to be international, worldwide, demanding for its overthrow a concentration of revolutionary will and revolutionary energy of the entire international proletariat, including the proletariat of the East.

Acting on international imperialism only through the Western European proletariat, we left it full of freedom of action and freedom of maneuvers in the East. While international imperialism in the person of the Entente has the East in its hands as a colony, where it appears as the full-powered master of all the natural wealth, it is guaranteed a successful outcome in all its separate clashes with the working masses of the home countries in the economic field, as in such a situation it possesses full means to “stop their mouths” in according with the satisfaction of their economic demands.

Our fruitless expectations of revolutionary help from the West in the course of these two years of revolution in Russia eloquently confirm this thesis.

But even in the event that the Western European worker succeeded in maintaining victory against his bourgeoisie, we would then still unavoidably have to collide with the East, as in the last resort the Western European bourgeoisie, after the example of its friend in misery, the Russian bourgeoisie, would occupy itself with the concentration of its forces in its “outlying districts,” and first of all in the East. It would not scruple, in the business of suppression of social revolution in Western Europe, to use the ancient national class hatred of the East toward the West, which hides in the breast of the East toward the West, as toward the bearer of the idea of the imperialist yoke, and organize a campaign of blacks against Europe.

And we not only admit this possibility, but are sure of it, as the two-year experience of the strife of the proletariat in Russia with its bourgeoisie has taught us a great deal in this respect.

Examining the East from the socio-economic point of view, we see that almost all of it appears to be the object of exploitation of Western European capital, the chief resource of its industry, and in this respect presents us with very rich material in the sense of revolutionary combustability.

If it were possible to compute the degree of exploitation of the East by Western capital, and in connection with this its indirect participation in the might and force of the bourgeois culture and civilization of the Europe and America which have exploited it and continue to exploit it, then we would see that a lion's share of all the material and spiritual wealth of the "whites" is stolen from the East, and built at the expense of the blood and sweat of hundreds of millions of laboring masses of "natives" of all colors and races.

It was necessary for up to ten million aborigines of America and Africa to perish, and to extinguish completely from the face of the earth the entire rich culture of the "Incas" in order that contemporary "freedom-loving" America, with her "cosmopolitan culture" of "progress and technology" might be formed. The proud skyscrapers of Chicago, New York, and other cities are on the bones of the "redskins" and Negroes tortured by inhuman planters and on the smoking ruins of the destroyed cities of the "Incas."

Christopher Columbus! How dearly and how much his name says to the heart of the European imperialist. You see, he "opened" the road to the European plunderers in America, England, France, Spain, Italy, and Germany – you see, all of them participated equally in the plundering, destruction, and devastation of native America, erecting their capitalistic cities in their bourgeois culture at her expense. And the invasion of Europe by the Tamerlanes, Ghengis Khan, and other Mongol princes in all the cruelty of its devastating strength pales a good deal before that which the Europeans did in the America which they "opened."

The position expressed by me in the beginning of this article is strikingly confirmed by the whole further period of the development of Western European imperialism, when it, having used "native" America in all its aspects, and having sated itself with her, turned all its attention to the East with India at its center, which, almost from the first days of the appearance in this world of this imperialism has not ceased to arouse in it a feeling of longing.

The entire history of the Crusades and the entire long succession of further bourgeois imperialistic wars in the East represent a precisely calculated policy of economic enslavement of the East by the Western European feudal lords and their descendants, which is gradually being crowned with almost full success for the latter.

And if we should occupy ourselves with the study of the condition of the Western European countries' industry in the East in the last period of its development, i.e. up to the moment of the beginning of the imperialistic world war, then we would see that up to this time the East was actually squeezed fast and convulsively writhing in the clutches of international capital.

All Asia and Africa were divided by Europe into a series of “spheres of influence” with frequently decorative acceptance of the “independence” of the more outstanding of their state formations like China, Persia, and Turkey.

But now already, although it is still not completely clear, the contradictions of interests in the East of the basic elements of the “holy alliance” are beginning to be visible, and sooner or later a serious collision between the separate competitions for first place in the piratic “League of Nations” of the strong imperialist states entering it must occur.

It does not for a minute follow to forget that if the East on the whole should find itself in complete economic enslavement by the West, then its national bourgeoisie, which renders a no less heavy “internal” pressure on the laboring East, appears as its second press.

We must not for a minute let slip from sight the fact that the business of the development of the international socialist revolution in the portion concerning the East can in no case limit itself only to the overthrow there of the power of Western Imperialism, but must continue to go further, as after this period before the East is the complex question of the overthrow of its clerical-feudal bourgeoisie which is in its essence playing the liberal, and is capable for the sake of its selfish interests of hourly changing its position in relation to its chief alien enemies.

We must always firmly recollect one thing: the East on the whole appears as the chief resource of international capitalism’s nourishment, and, in this respect, in the event of a worldwide socialist civil war, appears as a factor extremely advantageous to us and extremely disadvantageous to the international imperialists in our clash with them. Deprived of the East, and torn away from India, Afghanistan, Persia, and the other of its Asian and African colonies, Western European imperialism will be obliged to wither and die its own natural death.

But at this very time the East appears as the cradle of despotism, and we are not in the least guaranteed against the event that up to the moment of the overthrow of Western European imperialism, Eastern imperialism, finding itself for time being under the heavy press of its European confrere, will not begin to break out. We are not guaranteed against the event that the feudal lords of China, India, or Persia, and Turkey, having liberated themselves by our help, will not unite themselves with imperialist Japan and even with some one from Europe, will not organize a campaign against their “liberators” in order to save themselves by this means from the contagion of “Bolshevism.”

# Notes

## 1 The heritage of Arab communist parties

- 1 The exceptions have been small splinter groups, which participated in the activities of the Fourth International, and equally insignificant pro-Chinese communist parties, which emerged in Egypt and Lebanon in the aftermath of the Sino-Soviet split.
- 2 Egypt will not be fully discussed in this book because of its movement's unique development. For a complete analysis of the movement there, see Tareq Y. Ismael and Rifaat el-Said, *The Communist Movement in Egypt* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990).
- 3 Hanna Batatu, in his examination of the known occupations of Iraqi Communist Party members in the late 1940s, calculated that 27.6 percent were students; 9.7 percent professionals (of whom 7.2 percent were teachers); 9.1 percent "white collar" (of whom 5.2 percent were civil servants); 6.7 percent petite bourgeoisie; 2.6 percent peasants; 25.7 percent workers and semi-proletarians; and 15.6 percent armed forces and police. See Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 1168–1171.
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- 17 On Leninist organizational and political techniques see V.I. Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?* (1905), in *Collected Works 5*, op. cit., pp. 349–529 and V.I. Lenin, *The Terms of Admission Into the Communist International* (1921), in *Collected Works 31*, op. cit., pp. 216–221.
- 18 V.I. Lenin, "Report of the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions (1921)," in *Collected Works 31*, op. cit., p. 242.
- 19 Lenin believed that it was obligatory to use  
any, even the smallest, rift between enemies, any conflict of interests among the bourgeoisie of the various countries and among the various groups or types of bourgeoisie with the various countries, and also [to take advantage of] any, even the smallest, opportunity of winning a mass ally, even though this ally is temporary, vacillating, unstable, unreliable, and conditional.  
V.I. Lenin, "Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder," in *Collected Works 31*, op. cit., pp. 70–71.
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- 63 Ibid., p. 108.
- 64 *Al Hayah*, Beirut (August 21, 1968), pp. 1–7.
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Kuwait was liberated from occupation by virtue of the world's consensus embodied in international law through Security Council and UN Resolutions. However, under this cover the U.S. worked fearful destruction in Iraq, culminating in direct military occupation of the region.

The statement called for an end to “the continued presence of foreign forces on our soil” and requested “democratic freedoms, respect for human rights, and the restoration or establishment of modern constitutions.” It also called for

closer relations with Arab brothers . . . [and] united efforts to solve complex major problems justly and permanently, especially the issue of the Palestinian Arab people, with their right to return, determine their destiny, and establish their independent state on their own land under the leadership of the PLO, their sole legitimate representative.

*Al-Yasar*, Cairo (June 10, 1991), pp. 22–23.

- 83 *Al-Shira'*, Beirut (August 19, 1991), pp. 28–29.
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- 85 CPSU Central Committee report delivered by M.S. Gorbachev at the nineteenth All Union CPSU conference, Moscow, June 28, 1988.
- 86 For the analysis of the Gorbachev new policy as an expression of “a middle-class revolt,” see Jerry Hough, *Russia and the West: Gorbachev and the Politics of Reform*, 2nd edn (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), p. 178.
- 87 The real meaning of this goal has been clearly stated by Vladimir Lukin, who was Chief of Gorbachev's planning staff and then the Russian Ambassador in Washington, DC. As he wrote in October, 1988:

By Europe we should understand not only a geopolitical phenomenon, but also a definite method as to how to live, think, communicate with other people. . . . The ‘common European home’ is the home of civilization of which we have been on the periphery for a long time. The processes that are going on today in our country and in a number of socialist countries in Eastern Europe have besides everything else a similar historical dimension – the dimension of movement towards a return to Europe in the civilized meaning of the word.

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- 90 For reference to Gorbachev's ideas summarized in this section, see M. Gorbachev, "October and Perestroika: The Revolution Continues," and his "Report at the 19th All-Union Conference of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union," in *Information Bulletin* (December, 1987), pp. 3–24; (September, 1988), pp. 3–27.
- 91 Jerry Hough, *Russia and the West: Gorbachev and the Politics of Reform*, 2nd edn (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), p. 234.
- 92 The new non-confrontational approach has been presented in an ideological language by Anotoli Adamishin, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in his article, "Humanity's Common Destiny," *International Affairs*, Moscow (February, 1989), p. 9. For the more realistic and geopolitical causes of the new policy see Igor Maleshenko, "When the Stakes are High. The Cold War is Over. Who is the Winner?," *New Times*, Moscow (March 24, 1990), pp. 20–22.
- 93 Andrei Kolosov, "Reappraisal of USSR Third World Policy," *International Affairs*, Moscow (May, 1990), p. 36.
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- 99 Philip Robins, "Middle East I: Arabs Eye Eastern Europe Warily," *The World Today* (August/September, 1990), pp. 157–158.
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## 6 The crisis of communism in the Arab world: retrospect and prospects

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- 3 Muhsin Ibrahim, "Azmat al-Ahزاب al Shi'u'iyah fi Al-Mashriq Al-'Arabi" (The Crisis of the Communist Parties in the Arab World), *Al-Hurriya*, Beirut (June 1, 1963), p. 8.
- 4 Karl Marx, "On Bakunin's Statism and Anarchy," in D. McLellan (ed.) *Karl Marx: Selected Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 561.
- 5 Karl Marx, "Letter to Mikhailovsky," in D. McLellan (ed.) *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, op. cit., p. 571.
- 6 Muhsin Ibrahim, "Al-Ahزاب al Shi'u'iyah Amam Harakat Altatawir fi Al-Mujtama' 'al-'Arabi al-Hadith" (The Communist Parties and the Development Process in the Modern Arab Society), *Al-Hurriya*, Beirut (June 8, 1964).
- 7 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963), pp. 148–158.
- 8 Frantz Fanon, "The Struggle of the Underdeveloped Nations," *Al-Hurriya*, Beirut (January 7, 1963), pp. 10–11.
- 9 *The Charter* (Cairo: Information Department, n.d.), p. 50.
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- 12 "The Tripoli Programme," *African Revolution*, Algiers (July–August, 1963), p. 57.
- 13 Fuad Nassar and Aziz al-Hajj, "The National-Liberation Movement and the World Revolutionary Process," *World Marxist Review* (vol. VII, no. 3, March, 1964), pp. 8–13.
- 14 For analysis of the St Petersburg, Moscow, and Kronstadt uprisings against the Bolsheviks, see Paul Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1970).
- 15 Chris Harman, *Class Struggles in Eastern Europe 1945–83* (London and Sydney: Pluto Press, 1983), p. 2.
- 16 Tareq Y. Ismael and Jacqueline S. Ismael, *The Communist Movement in Syria and Lebanon* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1998), p. 231.
- 17 Ibid., p. 235.
- 18 Ibid., p. 231.
- 19 Ibid., p. 232.
- 20 Ibid., p. 234.
- 21 Ibid., p. 232.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid., p. 233.
- 24 *The Charter*, op. cit., p. 91.
- 25 Joseph Stalin, *Marxism and the National and Colonial Question* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1941), p. 8.
- 26 Munif al-Razzaz, *The Evolution of the Meaning of Nationalism*, trans. Ibrahim Abu Lughod (New York: Doubleday, 1963), p. 21.
- 27 Muhsin Ibrahim, op. cit.
- 28 Ilyas Murqus, *Mawdh'at Ila Muatmar Ishtraki 'Arabi* (Damascus: Dar Dimishq, June 10, 1963), p. 15.
- 29 Al-Hakam Darwaza, *Al-Shiu'iyah al-Mahallya Wa Maraket al-'Arab al-Qawmiyya* (Beirut: Dar al-Fajr, 1961), p. 475.
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- 39 Ibid., pp. 304–305.
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- 43 Michael K. Clark, *Algeria in Turmoil* (New York: Universal Library, 1960), p. 320.
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- 46 Uri Ra’anan, “The USSR in the Near East: A Decade of Vicissitudes,” in Jack H. Thompson and Robert D. Reischaur (eds) *Modernization of the Arab World* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1966), pp. 241–245.
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- 49 As he wrote:

Bolshevism is only another name for socialism, and socialism means liberation of the workers from the capitalistic and oppressive governments. Muslims must hope for its success, since they too are workers and suffer from the same oppression, and if socialism succeeds, the subjugation of people will end. True, Communism is not in conformity with Islamic law, but neither are the activities of the European governments.

Quoted in A.H. Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798–1939* (London, 1962), p. 304.

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- 51 Elias Murqos, *Tarikh El-Ahzab El-Shi’iyyah fi al-Watan al-‘Arabi* (Beirut: Al-Tali’ah Press, 1964), pp. 145–148.
- 52 Ibid., pp. 149–156.
- 53 Ibid., pp. 157–162.
- 54 Ibid., 163–167.
- 55 Ibid., 168–175.
- 56 V.I. Lenin, “Letters on Tactics,” in *Collected Works* 24 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), p. 45. Emphasis in the original.
- 57 Ilyas Murqas, *Nadhriyat al-Hizb ‘ind Lenin was al-Mawqif al-‘Arabi al Rahin* (Beirut: Dar al Haqiqah, March, 1970), p. 208.
- 58 See Tareq Y. Ismael, *The Communist Movement in Syria and Lebanon*, op. cit., pp. 81–100.
- 59 Ibid., pp. 168–213.
- 60 However, by successors, it must be made clear here that I am referring to the Russian state and its major governing parties and institutions. I am not referring to the Communist Party of Russia, which, although not an insignificant actor in Russian politics, has had little impact on international politics.
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- 66 G.G. Kosach, *Krasnyi Flag Nad Blizhnim Vostolcom? Kompartii Egipta, Palistiny, Sirii i Libana u 20–30 e gody* (Moscow: Institut Stran Azii i Afriki pri MGU im Lomonosova, 2001), p. 416.
- 67 Ibid., pp. 416–417.
- 68 G.G. Kosach and H. Melkumian, “Rossija, Blizhnij Vostok i Arabskij Mir: K voyrosu ob osnovah vzaimodeistvia,” in *Rosij no Blizhnem Vostoke: Celi zadatshi, vozmozhnosti* (Moscow: Institute of Israeli and Middle Eastern Studies, 2001), p.125.

### **Appendix 1: “A Manifesto to the Peoples of the East”**

- 1 The Baku congress approved in principle the issuing of this “Manifesto to the Peoples of the East,” the text of which was not presented to the delegates or included in the official records of the congress. It leaves no room for doubt as to the real fate in store for Islam under communist domination. – Ed.

### **Appendix 2: “The Tasks of the Communists in the All-Arab National Movement”**

- 1 Fellahin – peasants; Bedouins – pastoral tribes. – Ed.
- 2 Sheikh – the head of a tribe, village, etc., combining spiritual and civil power. – Ed.
- 3 Concerning compradores.– Ed.
- 4 Ostensibly a fifth, but actually a larger part of the crop, exacted by the landowners for their benefit. – Ed.
- 5 Reform Party of Tunisia. – Ed.
- 6 A militant Arab tribe under the leadership of Ibn Saud. – Ed.
- 7 See the Program of Action of the Communist Party of Egypt, pp. 170–182 of the current collection. – Ed.
- 8 “The National Bloc” – the National Reform party of Syria. – Ed.
- 9 The top leaders of the National Reform movement in Palestine. – Ed.

### **Appendix 3: “The Tasks of the Communist Party of Palestine in the Countryside”**

- 1 Note. The struggle against reformist slogans and plans is especially important, because these slogans create an illusion for the fellah, temporarily pacifying him, but in reality they even strengthen his enslavement (the agricultural bank and a loan are the mighty weapons of expropriation). Our slogans must have in view a revolutionary, and not a reformist solution of the agrarian question.
- 2 The Muslim clergy. – Ed.
- 3 The Zionist trade union organization – a section of the Amsterdam International. – Ed.
- 4 Jewish labor – a slogan by which the Zionists wage a campaign to lay off Arab workers and to replace them with Jewish workers. – Ed.

### **Appendix 4: “Work Among the Peasants” and “The Struggle Against Zionism”**

- 1 The Johnson-Crobie and Simpson Committees are English government committees which investigated the situation of the Palestine peasantry,

1929–1930, and published corresponding reports. Vilkansky is a Zionist agronomist, who published a book in 1930 on the condition of the Arab fellahin. – Ed.

- 2 The term applied to land in the Turkish Empire, which originally belonged to the Sultan, but subsequently became in fact, state lands. – Ed.
- 3 Literally, “15 for 10,” that is, for every 10 piasters the fellah borrows from the usurer or landowner at the beginning of the summer he must return 15 piasters after the harvest. – Ed.
- 4 Vaherai – state or crown lands; miri – communal lands. – Ed.
- 5 A money tax per dunam, as over against the tithe (ashar), which is paid in kind. – Ed.
- 6 A Zionist slogan, meaning “Seizure of Labor.” – Ed.
- 7 Mill – 0.01 Palestine pounds, that is, approximately one kopeck. – Ed.

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