SOCIALISM, INTERNATIONALISM AND ZIONISM: THE INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY AND PALESTINE, C. 1917–1939

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Socialism, Internationalism and Zionism: The Independent Labour Party and Palestine, c. 1917–1939

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Abstract

Using the Independent Labour Party (ILP) as its case study, this thesis examines the relationship between the labour movement's interpretations of internationalism and its attitudes towards Zionism during the interwar years. The study locates responses to developments in Palestine within the broader framework of the labour movement's conceptualisation of internationalist thought and practice with regard to issues such as immigration, imperialism and nationalism. Moreover, it examines the phenomenon of left-wing anti-Zionism, which has often been inadequately explored in the existing historiography of the interwar period.

The ILP contained within it a broad spectrum of opinion; its intra-sectional debates therefore frequently reflected the diversity of thought within the labour movement. Furthermore, an analysis of the ILP's debates requires a consideration of transnational perspectives because of the party's involvement in networks and organisations such as the League Against Imperialism (LAI). Because of the party's manifold links to variety of actors on political scene, it can serve as a prism through which we can explore the breadth of political debates within the left, both within Britain and at an international level.

The thesis is divided into five thematic chapters, starting with a broad discussion of internationalist thought within in the ILP. The second chapter examines internal ILP debates on Palestine, while the third analyses how international left-wing organisations – notably the Labour and Socialist International (LSI) and the LAI – approached the issue. This is followed by an analysis of how ILPers interpreted the role of League of Nations Mandates, with particular focus on Palestine. Finally, the question of anti-Semitism and its influence on the ILP's stance regarding mandatory rule and Zionism is considered.

This study draws extensively on records relating to the Labour Party, the ILP, the LSI and the LAI, using sources such as conference reports, pamphlets, and newspapers. In addition, the personal papers and correspondence of key figures such as Ramsay MacDonald and James Maxton have been consulted.

Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved.

I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 91,066 words

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Abbreviations

CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
BUF	British Union of Fascists
IBRSU	International Bureau for Revolutionary Socialist Unity
ILP	Independent Labour Party
JC	Jewish Chronicle
JTA	Jewish Telegraphic Agency
LAI	League Against Imperialism
LSI	Labour and Socialist International
NAC	National Administrative Council
NAFTA	National Amalgamated Furnishing Trades Association
NEC	National Executive Committee
NMWM	No More War Movement
PCP	Palestine Communist Party
PAWS	Palestine Arab Workers' Society
PMC	Permanent Mandates Commission
UDC	Union of Democratic Control
WRI	War Resisters International

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Introduction

This study examines the relationship between the labour movement's interpretations of internationalism and its attitudes towards Zionism during the interwar years. Internationalism is an important and intricate concept in the history of the labour movement.[1] As such, the study is concerned with one overarching question: how was the idea of internationalism, in all its various forms, applied to Palestine? The thesis seeks to locate responses to the question of Mandatory Palestine within the broader framework of the labour movement's conceptualisation of issues such as international socialist interaction, imperialism, nationalism, and immigration. Its central objective is to explore the debates within the labour movement at both national and transnational levels and understand how it came to adopt various positions towards Palestine. This is of significance because, as Stephen Howe has noted, 'There has been no single international issue on which British socialists, and indeed socialists in all countries have been more deeply divided than on the question of Palestine'.[2]

This approach appears appropriate given that as Marcel van der Linden has written, labour history has always been global history, since the growth and spread of the labour movement was intrinsically a global phenomenon.[3] Zionism too is an inherently international movement. These observations have important implications for my methodology; as Michael Hanagan has argued, labour historians 'must follow processes where they lead' rather than be constricted by borders.[4] Given that the British labour movement has often been viewed through the prism of 'exceptionalism', by broadening the scope of study, it will be possible to examine the degree to which organised Labour's discourse on Zionism was a product of transnational rather than exclusively national developments. In addition, it provides a case study for how the British and international

[1] See Fritz von Holthoon and Marcel van der Linden, 'Introduction' in Fritz von Holthoon and Marcel van der Linden (eds.) *Internationalism in the Labour Movement 1830-1940* (Leiden, 1988). As R.M Douglas noted, the term is 'susceptible to a variety of definitions and associations', Douglas, *The Labour Party, Nationalism and Internationalism: 1939-1951* (London, 2004), p. 4.
[2] Stephen Howe, *Anti-Colonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire 1918-1964* (Oxford, 1993), p. 148.
[3] Marcel van der Linden, 'New Approaches to Global Labour History', *International Labour and Working-Class History* 66 (2004), p. 2.
[4] Michael Hanagan, 'An Agenda for Transnational Labor History', *International Review of Social History* 49 (2004), p. 466.

labour movements, with their 'anti-imperialist' tradition, reacted to a Labour government administering the British Empire for the first time.

From the outset, it should be acknowledged that recent developments in labour history demand a radical shift in our approach to the subject of international (and indeed national) labour. The proponents of 'global' or 'transnational' labour history such as Marcel van der Linden, contend that previous 'international' histories are all too often disproportionally Eurocentric and focus excessively upon the institutional aspect of the international labour movement.[5] Instead, transnational history attempts to examine 'the flow of people… (and) ideas between nations involving concomitant networks across political borders'.[6] Even more fundamentally, it is also claimed that the majority of categories used by labour historians, including the very concept of 'the working class' should be reconsidered.[7]

In order to achieve this, one section of the British labour movement, the Independent Labour Party (ILP), will be the focus of the study. It might seem counterintuitive to place such emphasis on the ILP rather than on Labour's policies. In the view of some scholars, the ILP became increasingly marginalised during the interwar years, culminating in disaffiliation from Labour in 1932 – a development which it has been argued effectively rendered the ILP irrelevant.[8] However, one key reason for this approach is that although the ILP was not the most influential element within the labour movement, it was the most self-consciously internationalist section, and accordingly contained a number of 'fervent' internationalists within its ranks.[9] Thus, a wealth of material relating to the intricacies of internationalism was produced by leading ILP members such as Ramsay MacDonald, H.N.

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[5] Marcel van der Linden, 'Introduction' in *Transnational Labour History: Explorations* (London, 2003), p. 6-7.
[6] Melanie Nolan, Donald MacRalid and Neville Kirk, 'Introduction', Transnational Labour in the Age of Globalisation, *Labour History Review* 73 (2010), p. 9.
[7] Marcel van der Linden, 'Labour History: An International Movement', *Labour History* 89 (2005), p. 229.
[8] Arthur Marwick, 'The Independent Labour Party in the Nineteen-Twenties', *Historical Research 35* (1962), p. 62.
[9] David Howell, *A Lost Left: Three Studies in Socialism and Nationalism* (Manchester, 1986), p. 270. In addition, Howell states that the first Labour government in 1924 came into conflict with ILPers as its 'disconcertingly national' direction was at odds with the ILP's 'internationalist… traditions'. Idem, p. 265. This 'tradition' has been recognised by several scholars. For instance, Paul Ward has noted that the ILP 'prided itself on expressions of internationalism'. Paul Ward, *Red Flag Union Jack: Englishness Patriotism and the British Left, 1881 - 1924* (1998), p. 114. Chris Wrigley has demonstrated that from its inception, the ILP was, for a number of reasons, 'attracted' to internationalism. See Wrigley, 'The ILP and the Second International' in D. James, T. Jowett and Keith Laybourn (eds.) *The Centennial History of the Independent Labour Party* (Halifax, 1992), p. 306; John N. Horne has written that at the outbreak of war in Europe, the ILP was the 'driving force behind Labour internationalism'. See Horne, *Labour at War; Britain and France 1914-1918* (Oxford, 1991), p. 30.

Brailsford and Fenner Brockway. Furthermore, questions pertaining to internationalism featured prominently in the ILP's newspaper the *New Leader*, the party's publications, as well as being a central point of discussion at its annual conferences and the meetings of its National Administrative Council.

There are several important reasons why the ILP allows us to gain a sense of the wider debates within the labour movement. First, for a significant period of the interwar years, the ILP contained within it a broad spectrum of opinion; its intra-sectional debates therefore often reflected the diversity of thought within the labour movement. Secondly, from the mid-1920s onwards, the leadership of the ILP increasingly came into open conflict with the Labour Party. Crucially, however, these disputes did not simply take the form of unconstructive denunciations, rather, the ILP attempted to win over Labour Party members to a particular political position, based on its interpretation of what the labour movement's response should be to key tenets of internationalism. If we were simply to chart the mainstream policy of the interwar Labour Party in government and in opposition, the internal debates would not be as apparent. Thirdly, whereas the Labour Party largely dismissed the communist section of the labour movement, the ILP engaged in serious and sustained dialogue, and even joint activity with communists, at local, national and transnational levels. Thus, from this we will be able to gauge the nature of discussion across a relatively wide spectrum of the labour movement's political thought.

Furthermore, on a theoretical level, an analysis of the ILP enables us to examine more fully the interwar labour movement from a transnational perspective. This is because the ILP were considerably more willing to engage in transnational activism than were the Labour Party. The term 'transnational' refers to forms of internationalism which emphasise the role of networks and non-state actors and organisations.[10] For instance, while Labour sought to secure its objectives through the League of Nations, the ILP often attempted to solve the challenges of the interwar years through involvement in non-state networks such as the League Against Imperialism (LAI), the Congress Against War and Fascism and the International Bureau of Revolutionary Socialist Unity (IBRSU). The time period is

[10] See Daniel Laqua, 'Preface', in idem (ed.), *Internationalism Reconfigured: Transnational Ideas and Movements Between the World Wars* (London, 2011), p. xii; Furthermore, Laqua notes that, 'internationalism often relied on transnational structures and movements' and 'transnational action was driven by a particular understandings of internationalism.' Idem, p. xii.

apposite as the interwar years proved to be a particularly vibrant period for various forms of internationalism.[11]

In contrast to the mainstream of the Labour Party, leading ILP activists such as James Maxton and Fenner Brockway took seriously the issue of anti-colonialism, which very often translated into support for anti-colonial nationalist movements and, in the 1930s, notable anti-colonists such as George Padmore and C.L.R. James were closely associated with the ILP.[12] This is particularly relevant and complex in the case of Palestine, given that Palestinian Arab nationalism and Zionism constituted two competing nationalist movements, both of which perceived themselves to be struggling for self-determination against an imperial power.

This study uses a variety of primary material, as well as drawing on, and critiquing, existing secondary literature. The main centre for the history of transnational labour is the International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam (IISH), containing extensive records relating to key organisations such as the Labour and Socialist International (LSI) and the League Against Imperialism (LAI). The LAI records that have been consulted include resolutions, minutes of national and international conferences and its executive committee, as well as its official publication the *Anti-Imperialist Review*. Such material allows us to gauge the inter- and transnational dimensions of British debates on Palestine, the Mandates system and national self-determination.

For the British labour movement, the People's History Museum in Manchester holds the most comprehensive and wide-ranging source material, including the ILP's theoretical journal *The Socialist Review* and publications issued by *Poale Zion.* The London School of Economics (LSE) holds the ILP's annual reports and National Administrative Council minutes as well as a considerable number of party pamphlets and copies of its newspaper, the *New Leader*. These records allow us to examine the breadth and scope of debates within the ILP. The annual reports contain not only the resolutions which formed official party policy, but also the minutes of the debates in which minority views were expressed.

[11] Patricia Clavin and Glenda Sluga (eds.) *Internationalisms: A Twentieth Century History* (Cambridge, 2017); Daniel Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society in the 1920s* (Cambridge, 2012).
[12] Stephen Howe, *Anti-Colonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire 1918-1964* (Oxford, 1993), p. 71.

Similarly, the *New Leader* provides us not only the official editorial line but also a range of perspectives such as the articles by regular columnists and letters and correspondence from ILP activists. Personal papers such as MacDonald's, Maxton's and Reginald Bridgeman's will also be consulted. In addition, the memoirs, and autobiographies of some of the key protagonists such as Fenner Brockway will be critically evaluated. Where possible, claims made in these autobiographical accounts will be scrutinised with reference to other contemporary sources. There are, however, certain gaps in the documentary record as many ILP records were destroyed after its offices were bombed during the Second World War.[13] This included many of Brockway's papers and accounts for the fact that there is very little material in Brockway's papers relating to Palestine in the interwar years.[14]

Another key primary source is contemporary newspapers, including several Anglo-Jewish community newspapers such as the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* and the *Jewish Chronicle,* as well as American-Jewish publications such as the *Jewish Criterion* and the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle,* all of which reported extensively on matters relating to Palestine. The pro-Zionist stance of many of these publications will be taken into consideration when utilising these sources. The records of the League of Nations held at Geneva will also be an important source when addressing the question of British administration of Mandatory Palestine. For example, the records of the debates of the Assembly provide an insight into the interventions made by MacDonald as a statesman on a global stage, and the minutes of the Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC) are insightful in terms of the interaction between the interwar Labour governments and the League.

The thesis takes a thematic approach, with a largely chronological structure within the chapters. The first chapter is a broad discussion of the developments of internationalist thought within the ILP, with a particular focus on the issue of anti-colonialism. The second chapter examines debates within the ILP on Palestine, while the third analyses how transnational organisations such as the LSI and LAI approached the issue. This is followed by an analysis of how League of Nations mandates were interpreted, with particular focus on Palestine. Finally, the question of anti-Semitism and how this informed the discourse is

[13] Chris Cook, *Sources in British Political History 1900-1951 Volume 1: A Guide to the Archives of Selected Organisations and Societies* (London 1975), p. 109.
[14] Fenner Brockway, *Towards Tomorrow: The Autobiography of Fenner Brockway* (London, 1977), pp. 140-141. This was confirmed by viewing Brockway's papers held at the Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge, FEBR.

considered. In this way, the issue of interwar Palestine will be viewed through a variety of 'lenses', which will allow for a detailed exploration of the complex factors which informed the debates.

While located within the field of labour history, the focus traces how ideas were articulated and contested. In this respect, the thesis also sheds light on the intellectual history of the interwar years.[15] In analysing debates within the ILP, Michael Freeden's influential model of ideological morphology is applicable to this study in several important ways. Freeden argues that ideologies are constructed from 'clusters' of political concepts. Some of these concepts are 'core' or 'ineliminable' to the ideology, whereas others are 'adjacent' or 'peripheral'.[16] He posits that ideology should be analysed via a 'close study and comprehension of the units of political thinking… those fundamental political concepts which shape political argument'.[17] Furthermore, Freeden argues that these concepts possess an 'essential contestability'.[18] Thus, when we examine debates over certain issues, we will explore how socialists thinkers sought to 'decontest', that is, assign specific meanings to particular political concepts.[19]

The nature of this study means that we will deal with several historiographies which often overlap. To begin, a discussion of interwar British labour movement, followed by a section which deals explicitly with the British Labour Party's foreign policy, including the question of empire and the mandates system. This is followed by a survey of the literature relating to the interwar international labour movement. The academic literature dedicated to the study of Zionism is very extensive. Therefore, it will be necessary to restrict the discussion to two aspects which constitute distinct but not entirely unrelated historiographies. The first of these is a selection of the scholarly literature relating to the

[15] In the field of intellectual history, internationalism and the development of international thought have attracted growing attention over the past two decades. To cite but a few examples: Paul Rich, 'Reinventing Peace: David Davies, Alfred Zimmern and Liberal Internationalism in Interwar Britain', *International Relations* 16 (2002), pp. 117–133; Lucian Ashworth, *International Relations Theory and the Labour Party: Intellectuals and Policy Making 1918–1945* (London, 2007); Tomohito Baji, 'Zionist Internationalism? Alfred Zimmern's Post-Racial Commonwealth', *Modern Intellectual History* 13 3 (2016), pp. 623–51; Tommaso Milani, 'Retreat from the Global? European Unity and British Progressive Intellectuals, 1930–1945', *International History Review* 42 (2020), pp. 99–116.
[16] Michael Freeden, 'The Morphological Analysis of Ideology', in M. Freeden and M. Stears (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Ideologies* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 124-125.
[17] Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theories: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 13-14.
[18] Ibid., pp. 55-60.
[19] Ibid., p. 82; Freeden argues that in turn, concepts possess several 'micro-components' which also have many possible meanings, see Idem, 'The Morphological Analysis of Ideology', pp. 124-125.

theory and practice of Zionism, with particular reference to the key developments which have taken place in Israeli scholarship. The second section concerns the literature relating to the British labour movement and the Zionist movement as well as an examination of the relationship between international labour and Zionism.

The British Labour Movement

Before engaging with the historiography of the ILP, we will first examine the labour movement as a whole. The interwar period proved to be a momentous time for the British labour movement. These years witnessed a number of crucial domestic developments ranging from the formation of the Communist Party, the election of two minority Labour governments, the general strike of 1926, the hunger marches, Ramsay MacDonald's 'betrayal', the disaffiliation of the ILP from Labour, the emergence of an anti-fascist movement to the creation of 'Little Moscows'. Accordingly, a voluminous and wide-ranging historiography has been produced. Biography for instance, has long been, and continues to form, a key element of history regarding the labour movement, particularly its 'high politics'. Influential politicians like Ramsay MacDonald, George Lansbury, Clement Attlee and James Maxton have each been the subject of more than one biographical study.[20] However, there are notable absences, such as Fenner Brockway, who was a major figure in labour, anti-war and anti-colonial movements for an extensive period of time.[21] Furthermore, in the cases of Maxton, MacDonald and Brailsford, the biographical studies have not explored the question of Palestine in much detail. In other important respects, the scholarly literature appears deficient. For example, curiously, given that it is the most important electoral expression of organised labour, Matthew Worley was able to write prior to the publication of his own study in 2005, that there had 'never been a general history of the Labour Party concentrated specifically on the years between 1918 and 1939'.[22]

[20] See for example Lauchan MacNeil, *Ramsay MacDonald: A Political Biography* (London, 1938); Kevin Morgan, *Ramsay MacDonald* (London, 2006);Kenneth Harris, *Attlee* (London, 1982) and Trevor Burridge, *Clement Attlee: A Political Biography* (London, 1985); Jonathan Schneer, *George Lansbury* (Manchester, 1990); John Shepherd, *George Lansbury: At the Heart of Old Labour* (Oxford, 2002); Gilbert McAlister, *James Maxton: Portrait of a Rebel* (London, 1935); John McNair, *James Maxton: The Beloved Rebel* (London, 1955), William Knox, *James Maxton* (Manchester, 1987).

[21] There are, however, several autobiographical accounts by Brockway, which are referred to in this study.

[22] Matthew Worley, *Inside the Gate: A History of The British Labour Party Between the Wars* (Manchester, 2005), p. 1.

The initial historiography relating to the interwar years did not analyse the labour movement as a whole but confined itself to the parliamentary electoral fortunes of the Labour Party. Much of the scholarship on the party itself was in turn narrow in its scope, examining the leadership, the parliamentary party and conference decisions and constituted a 'markedly internalist' approach which attempted to explain policy shifts 'in terms of conflicts of power and personality within the party'.[23] Nevertheless, it is worth outlining in order to properly chart the key historiographical developments. Francis Williams' *The Fifty Years March: The Rise of the Labour Party* produced in the late 1940s was one such work.[24] Williams and others argued that the interwar Labour Party had 'come of age' by 1918 and thus was in a position to challenge for power. The interwar years were characterised by gradual electoral progress and its two minority governments, which although hampered by inexperience and a lack of authority within the House of Commons, did achieve notable successes in foreign policy as well as in domestic legislation such as Wheatley's Housing Act of 1924.[25]

In the 1960s this approach was challenged by sections of the so-called 'New Left' as scholars such as Ralph Milliband, John Saville and Raymond Williams emphasised that Labour could not be treated like any other political party because it was not merely a party but a movement.[26] Therefore, it could only be properly understood in such terms. Furthermore, these historians criticised the parliamentary party's strategy of 'gradualism' which was in their view not only ineffective, but also weakened Labour's electoral appeal by undermining its distinctiveness.[27] Ironically, according to this view, the leaders' willingness to compromise and appear 'respectable' did not prevent their Tory opponents from scaremongering the electorate about Labour's radicalism.[28] The dominance of what was termed 'labourist' ideology i.e. the primacy of the trade unionism and the total acceptance of parliamentary methods ensured the subordination of the left wing of the party and rendered illusory the notion of the Labour Party as a force for socialism.[29] In

[23]'Editorial: The Labour Party and Social Democracy', *History Workshop* 12 (1981), p. 2.
[24] Francis Williams, *The Fifty Years' March: The Rise of the Labour Party* (London, 1949).
[25] Richard Lyman, 'The British Labour Party: The Conflict Between Socialist Ideals and Practical Politics Between the Wars', *The Journal of British Studies* 5, no. 1 (1965), p. 141.
[26] Ralph Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism: A Study in the Politics of Labour* (London, 1961).
[27] Ibid., p. 143.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Madeline Davis, 'Labourism and the New Left' in John Callaghan, Steven Fielding and Steve Ludham (eds.), *Interpreting the Labour Party: Approaches to Labour Politics and History* (Manchester, 2003), pp. 44.

fact, Saville even went so far as to denounce 'labourism' as 'the theory and practice of class collaboration'.[30] Nevertheless, there was a significant similarity in both accounts, as the notion of 'the forward march of Labour' heavily informed these two otherwise contrasting perspectives. This decisive assumption was made, as James Cronin has noted, 'despite the fact that the record from the 1930s was anything but encouraging'.[31]

In more recent years, the idea that Labour was the 'inevitable' product of 'the rise of class politics' has come under serious criticism from historians such as Jon Lawrence who has claimed that this argument was 'as much about legitimising current struggles as it was analysing past politics'.[32] Works by Jon Lawrence, Miles Taylor and Duncan Tanner have stressed that rather than being passive beneficiaries of social forces, political parties 'not only have a role in making their own fortunes' but also 'in constructing social and political identities and redefining their audience'.[33] Thus, more recent scholarship has taken a new direction, in the sense that whilst restoring the focus onto the party, it does not mean a return to 'high politics' but rather the role of the Labour Party at both national and local levels in creating its own fortunes. Central to the current historiography is a theoretical discussion as to the extent to which the rise of British labour politics was a product of social forces or whether it was the party and movement itself which played an active role in shaping the political culture in which it operated.

Turning to the history of the wider labour movement broadens the scholarly literature even further. For example, works by Nigel Copsey, David Renton and Lewis Mates have all examined the role of the labour movement in interwar anti-fascist activity, exploring issues such as the sharp differences between Labour and the CPGB over anti-fascist theory and strategy and the effectiveness of popular anti-fascism versus anti-fascist legislation.[34] Philip Coupland explored the previously overlooked dynamic between the labour movement and support for fascism. He demonstrated that although the British Union of

[30] John Saville, 'The Ideology of Labourism' in R. Benewick (ed.), *Knowledge and Belief in Politics: The Problem of Ideology* (London, 1973), p. 215.
[31] James Cronin, 'Politics, Class Structure and the Enduring Weakness of British Social Democracy' *Journal of Social History* 16 (1983), p. 128.
[32] Jon Lawrence, *Speaking for the People: Party, Language and Popular Politics in England 1867-1914* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 14.
[33] Matthew Worley, *Inside the Gate,* p. 5; Duncan Tanner, *Political Change and the Labour Party* (Cambridge, 1990).
[34] Nigel Copsey and Dave Renton (eds.) *British Fascism, the Labour Movement and the State* (New York, 2005).

Fascists (BUF) ultimately moved to purge its 'radical' elements, the organisation attempted to infiltrate and then imitate the trade union movement, which was not only led by a former ILPer and Labour MP Oswald Mosley but also involved former senior ILPer John Beckett and even ex-Communist Party organisers.[35]

The ILP

As Gidon Cohen has shown, the early histories of the ILP placed the party within the 'forward march' narrative.[36] According to this view, the ILP's significance was its central role in the foundation of the Labour Party, acting a reconciling force between socialists and trade unionists.[37] Scholars such as Robert Dowse argued that in an era before individual party membership, the ILP was the main route through which socialists joined the Labour Party.[38] He also highlighted how the ILP had produced much of the early Labour leadership such as Hardie, MacDonald and Snowden.[39] Moreover, it was argued that the ILP played an integral role in the rise of Labour at the expense of the Liberal Party. Thus, Dowse wrote that the defections from the Liberals to the ILP left the former 'robbed of their brains' and enabled Labour to engage with foreign policy which 'helped to convince the electorate that Labour was the rightful heir of Liberalism'.[40] However, so the argument went, in 1918, with Labour's constitution adopting an overtly 'socialist goal' and allowing individual membership, the ILP became increasingly marginal.[41] This was followed by its supposedly 'suicidal' decision to disaffiliate in 1932, after which the party rapidly faded into political obscurity.[42]

Some of the later studies of the ILP moved away from this framework and focused on the party's activities within a regional context. Scotland in particular has featured prominently

[35] Philip M. Coupland, 'Left-Wing Fascism' in Theory and Practice: The Case of the British Union of Fascists', *Twentieth Century British History* 13 (2002), p. 55; Thomas P. Lineham, *East London for Mosley: The British Union of Fascists in East London and South West Essex 1933-40* (London, 1996), p. 115.
[36] Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream: The Independent Labour Party From Disaffiliation to World War II* (London, 2007), pp. 1-2.
[37] Gidon Cohen, 'Myth, History and the Independent Labour Party' in Matthew Worley (ed.), Foundations *of the British Labour Party Identities, Cultures and Perspectives 1900-1939* (London, 2009), p. 98.
[38] Ibid., p. 1.
[39] Robert Dowse, *Left in the Centre: The Independent Labour Party 1893-1940* (London, 1966), p. 207.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Cohen, *Failure of a Dream*, p. 2.
[42] Keith Middlemass characterised disaffiliation as 'suicide in a fit of temporary insanity' see idem, *The Clydesiders: A Left-Wing Struggle For Parliamentary Power* (London, 1967), p. 259.

in this literature and above all the ILP's role in the era of 'Red Clydeside' in Glasgow.[43] The *Centennial History of the ILP* followed suit, primarily focusing on regional and local studies of the party. Only one essay in this volume was dedicated to internationalism, and this only dealt with the early years of the party.[44]

Cohen has perhaps done the most to challenge the prevailing views regarding the ILP. He has argued that while some of the key claims were sound, much of the existing literature was problematic for several reasons. For example, Cohen pointed out that Henry Pelling, author of the influential text *The Origins of the Labour Party*, had spoken directly to the early ILP leaders and had 'accepted much of their interpretation' not only of their own achievements but of their characterisation of other socialist groups such as the SDF.[45] Secondly, Cohen noted that much of the historiography of the ILP has been highly politicised, with disaffiliation seen as a 'cautionary tale' for the prospects of left wing groups operating outside of the Labour Party.[46] As a result, the literature had 'overplayed the speed and extent' of the ILP's decline.[47] Thirdly, he argued that disaffiliation itself had been wrongly 'characterised in ways that made it seems almost inexplicable' and that the post-disaffiliation ILP had either been completely neglected or caricatured.[48] Cohen maintained that the party, both pre- and post-disaffiliation was worthy of serious scholarly attention, as it provided 'spaces or arenas' in which individuals could 'express themselves and develop ideas and identities'.[49] Therefore, Cohen has in a sense, rehabilitated the post-disaffiliation ILP as an area of scholarly inquiry. Cohen's work also discussed the ILP's post-disaffiliation international affiliations and policy positions on some of the major international questions of the 1930s, such as the Spanish Civil war and Italy's invasion of Abyssinia.[50]

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[43] See for example Alan McKinley and R. J. Morris (eds.), *The ILP on Clydeside: From Foundation to Disintegration 1893-1932* (Manchester, 1991).
[44] D. James, T. Jowett and K. Laybourne (eds.), *The Centennial History of the Independent Labour Party* (Halifax, 1992).
[45] Gidon Cohen, 'Myth, History and the Independent Labour Party' in Matthew Worley (ed.), *Foundations of the British Labour Party Identities, Cultures and Perspectives 1900-1939* (London, 2009), p. 98.
[46] Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream: The Independent Labour Party From Disaffiliation to World War II* (London, 2007), p. 1.
[47] Cohen, 'The Independent Labour Party 1932-1939' (DPhil, University of York, 2001), p. 9.
[48] Cohen, 'The Independent Labour Party, Disaffiliation, Revolution and Standing Orders', *History* 86, (2001), p. 200.
[49] Cohen, 'Myth, History and the Independent Labour Party', p. 112.
[50] For Cohen's discussion of IBRSU see *Failure of a Dream*, pp. 167-170; for Spain see, pp. 176-191; for Abyssinia see, pp. 170-176.

Recently, Ian Bullock has published a study of the ILP in the interwar years, including a detailed analysis of the post-disaffiliation party. Bullock argues that the ILP essentially preserved a democratic socialist tradition and thus made a valuable contribution to the post-war Labour Party and British political culture more generally.[51] However, the book omits any in-depth discussion of international issues and erroneously assumes that there was unanimity on these questions. Bullock writes 'many of the party's positions, were accepted with something close to unanimity among ILP members themselves such as opposition… to imperialism' and 'support of internationalism in the wider world'.[52] This framing typifies a tendency to assume that there was a consensus on what 'internationalism' and 'anti-imperialism' meant. Therefore, one of the aims of this study is to explore the complex and contested nature of socialist internationalism, both in theory and in practice. The ILP's engagement with Zionism, Arab nationalism and mandatory rule in Palestine has the potential to shed fresh light on how socialist internationalisms were theorised and practiced and elucidate the differing visions of internationalism which were prevalent during the interwar years.

The ILP's newspaper, the *New Leader*, has been the subject of scholarly debate. F.M. Leventhal, biographer of H. N. Brailsford, favourably contrasted his time as editor to Brockway's subsequent efforts.[53] However, a more recent article by Hazel Kent has revaluated Brockway's record, pointing out that comparisons with Brailsford's reign are unhelpful in the sense that while the literary standards and scope may have declined, the NAC had specifically requested that the nature of the paper should alter into a more narrow party paper.[54] Moreover, Kent found that despite the party's decline in membership, under Brockway's stewardship the paper continued to enjoy a healthy circulation among non-party members.[55]

[51] Ian Bullock, *Under Siege: The Independent Labour Party in Interwar Britain* (Edmonton, 2017), p. 6.
[52] Ibid., p. 7.
[53] F. M. Leventhal, 'H. N. Brailsford and the New Leader', *Journal of Contemporary History* 9, No. 1 (1974), pp. 91-113.
[54] Hazel Kent, 'A Paper Not So Much for the Armchair But For the Factory and the Street': Fenner Brockway and the Independent Labour Party's *New Leader*, 1926-1946, *Labour History Review* 75 (2010), p. 212.
[55] Ibid., p. 219.

Labour Party Foreign Policy

The Labour Party's foreign policy has been the subject of much attention. It has been argued that because Labour was founded in order to represent domestic working-class interests, foreign issues were always of secondary concern.[56] One of the most important discussions relates to its precise ideological nature. Initial historiography on domestic developments argued that the interwar years saw socialism, albeit vaguely defined, shift from being a 'factional position' to a 'firm party commitment' for Labour.[57] According to scholars like Henry Winkler and Michael Gordon, a commitment to socialism undoubtedly extended into Labour's foreign policy.[58] Others such as Lewis Minkin and Patrick Seyd concurred with this analysis, contrasting the 'socialist' foreign policy of the interwar period with the post-war majority government's strategy which emphasised 'practicality and the national interest'.[59] To support the characterisation of foreign policy as 'socialist', Gordon cited assertions made by influential figures in the 1920s and 1930s such as Clement Attlee's claim that there could be 'no agreement between a Labour Opposition and a capitalist government' and Arthur Henderson's comments that the formulation of both domestic and foreign policy 'spring from our faith that the future belongs to Socialism'.[60] Furthermore, the adopted policy was deeply idealistic as it ultimately 'rested on a powerful vision… of how relations among nations *ought* to be conducted'.[61] However, this socialism was 'never reduced to a sharply defined, authoritative, totalistic doctrine'.[62]

However, more recent works such as Paul Bridgen's *The Labour Party and the Politics of War and Peace* take a different view, arguing that although Labour's pre-war intentions were genuinely radical and based upon interaction with the international socialist movement, Labour's actual interwar foreign policy in fact owed more to 'Gladstonian internationalism' than to socialism.[63] Rather than defining the course pursued as cohesively

[56] Henry Winkler, *British Labour Seeks a Foreign Policy* (New York, 2005), p. 1.
[57] Lewis Minkin and Patrick Seyd, 'The British Labour Party' in William E. Patterson and Alistair Thomas (eds.), *Social Democratic Parties in Western Europe* (London, 1977), p. 109.
[58] Winkler, *British Labour Seeks a Foreign Policy* (New York, 2005); Michael Gordon, *Conflict and Consensus in Labour's Foreign Policy: 1914-1965* (London, 1969).
[59] Minkin and Seyd, 'The British Labour Party', p. 109.
[60] Gordon, *Conflict and Consensus,* p. 6.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid., p. 8.
[63] Paul Bridgen, *The Labour Party and the Politics of War and Peace: 1900-1924* (London, 2009), p. 74 and p. 190.

'socialist', Bridgen stresses the complexity and diversity of influences on Labour's international policy in the immediate aftermath of the First World War. Hence, he identified three distinctive currents. Firstly, those who wished to promote international harmony and collective security through the establishment of the League of Nations. Second, those who wished to address the role that the economic system played in creating conflict and finally, the anti-militarism of the ILP.[64] However, we should note that Bridgen is by no means the first to emphasize the liberal influence on Labour's foreign policy, as Kenneth E. Miller's 1967 work *Socialism and Foreign Policy* also came to this conclusion.[65] Likewise, Rhiannon Vickers' study *The Labour Party and the World* argues that 'as far as foreign policy was concerned, it is not clear that the Labour Party had any socialist ideology as such'. Instead, 'by far the most important influence on Labour's foreign policy were liberal views of international relations'.[66] Therefore, for Vickers, the true significance of Labour's interwar foreign policy was not in its socialism but the perceived successes which 'demonstrated that Labour could be trusted to represent the nation and not just class interests, which was reassuring to the electorate'.[67] Furthermore, Vickers concluded that the Labour Party, both in government and in opposition, 'had some considerable impact upon British views of internationalism, collective security and the League of Nations'.[68]

In an analysis of this question, political scientist Lucian Ashworth suggests that it may be a false dichotomy to label ideals as either 'liberal' or 'socialist', as 'while values like peace and internationalism would have been shared by an earlier radical liberal tradition, this did not make it any less part of the socialist world'.[69] Thus, although the League of Nations itself was not socialist, its existence 'could be part of the development of a socialist world' as only when the threat of war had been eradicated could 'the work of building an international socialist society begin'.[70]

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[64] David Howell, 'Review: The Labour Party and the Politics of War and Peace 1900-1924 by Paul Bridgen', *Twentieth Century History* 21 (2010), pp. 433- 435.
[65] Kenneth E. Miller, *Socialism and Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice in Britain to 1931* (The Hague, 1967).
[66] Vickers, p. 5.
[67] Vickers, p. 101.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Lucian M. Ashworth, 'Rethinking a Socialist Foreign Policy: The British Labour Party and International Relations Experts 1918-1931', *International Labour and Working-Class History* 75 (2009), p. 45.
[70] Ibid.

On the issue of Labour attitudes towards empire, scholars have emphasised the diversity of thought within the movement on this question. For example, Caroline Knowles has noted that with regard to India, some Labourites argued for complete and immediate independence while others believed it was better for India to be under 'socialist' rule than that of Indian nationalists.[71] A number of historians have pointed out that key figures, although in agreement with Hobson's critique of empire were not automatically 'anti-imperialists'. For example, Ramsay MacDonald, who served as both Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, defined himself as a 'constructive imperialist'.[72] Moreover, most conclude that Labour governments pursued a policy of continuity as far as the empire was concerned.[73]

The first comprehensive study of Labour and the empire was Partha Sarathi Gupta's *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement: 1914-64*, which was published in 1975. In this text, Gupta argued that the existing literature produced by scholars such as John Naylor, Kenneth Miller and Michael Gordon was deficient in the sense that it 'neglected the evolution of labours colonial and commonwealth policy and their influence in turn on foreign policy'.[74] However, like these other authors, a central aim of Gupta's study was to engage in the debate regarding the tension between ideology and pragmatism in the Labour Party's external policy.[75] As the title indicates, the study analysed the labour movement as a whole rather than purely evaluating the official policy. Therefore, Gupta explored how the various groupings within the labour movement competed with each other to influence policy-making.[76] For instance, when some within the trade unionist section declared themselves against allowing 'economic nationalism' in India's steel and cotton industries, the 'radical anti-imperialist tradition' within the movement was strong enough to resist it.[77] Moreover, he attributes the influence of Fabian ideology as the 'chief explanation for the

[71] Caroline Knowles, *Race, Discourse and Labourism* (London, 1992), p. 29.
[72] Winkler, *British Labour*, p. 2.
[73] Francis Lee, *Fabianism and Colonialism: The Life and Political Thought of Lord Sydney Oliver* (London, 1988), p. 138; John Shepherd, 'A Gentleman at the Foreign Office: influences shaping Ramsay MacDonald's internationalism in 1924' in Paul Corthorn and Jonathan Davis (eds.), *The British Labour Party and the Wider World: Domestic Politics, Internationalism and Foreign Policy* (London, 2008), p. 44; Philip Williamson, *National Crisis National Government British Politics, the Economy and Empire 1926-1932* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 79.
[74] Partha Sarathi Gupta, *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement 1914-1964* (New York, 1975), p. 5.
[75] Ibid., pp. 5-7.
[76] Ibid., p. 7.
[77] Ibid.

slowness of Labour to abandon the concept of imperial rule'.[78] Gupta concluded that Labour did achieve some significant successes. For instance, while in opposition the party played a 'pioneering role' in the 'reform of labour laws in the colonies in general'.[79] Moreover, his largely sympathetic analysis pointed out that Labour was not in power for a significant enough period of time to effect far-reaching change and often lacked the parliamentary majority required to embark upon a radically different colonial policy.[80] Furthermore, Gupta blamed the intransigence of the Indian nationalists for the lack of democratisation in India.[81]

Stephen Howe was the first historian to examine in significant detail the link between anti-colonialism and British labour with his book *Anti-Colonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire:1918-1964.* Given the nature of the study, Howe did not look at official Labour Party policy, but rather the activities of more radical elements such as the ILP and the Communist Party. Regarding the interwar years, Howe emphasised the deep divisions that existed within the Labour Party, as 'the anticolonialist lobby' on the left of the party might be 'worlds apart' from the party leadership, especially when in government.[82] The study identified four 'broad currents'. The first of these two mainstream perspectives was 'constructivist imperialism', which sought to gradually enable self-government within empire. The second was the emphasis on 'native rights' and active preparation for self-government. The two more marginal outlooks were what Howe terms the 'self-designated Empire Socialists' who were wholly supportive of the imperialist status quo and finally, on the left, those who were outright anti-colonialists.[83] Regarding the CPGB, Howe found that the British Communist propaganda focused more on colonial injustice and exploitation rather than on imperialism as a world system, an emphasis which was strongly criticised by Moscow.[84] Howe also included a brief discussion of how the Union of Democratic Control (UDC), which had begun life in 1915 as a pressure group dedicated to anti-militarism and democratising the conduct of British foreign policy, engaged with anti-colonialism in the years after the First World War.[85]

[78] Ibid., p. 390.
[79] Ibid., p. 391
[80] Ibid., p. 390
[81] Ibid., pp. 390-391.
[82] Howe, *Anti-Colonialism in British Politics,* p. 47.
[83] Ibid., pp. 47- 48.
[84] Ibid., p. 55.
[85] Ibid., p. 191.

A key historiographical issue concerns Labour's attitudes towards empire. With Labour coming to power in 1924 the party found itself administering a vast empire, along with several League of Nations Mandates. This question is central to our study given that Palestine was a British Mandate throughout the interwar years. The traditional narrative has described the mandates system as a 'euphemism for colonies'. Take for example, Niall Ferguson's widely read work *Empire*, which approvingly quoted H. A. L. Fisher's assessment of mandates as 'the crudity of conquest draped in the veil of morality'.[86] That said, it is worth noting that Fisher's analysis was more nuanced, as he went on to add that 'annexing States as mandatories obliged at fixed intervals to give an account of their stewardship to a League Commission. That such a requirement was made and assented to was a clear advance in international morality'.[87]

Historians specialising in the mandates system have challenged the traditional narrative. In 2006, Michael D. Callahan contended that mandates had received 'almost no systematic scholarly attention' and therefore the claim that mandates differed only in name from other colonial possession was simply an unevidenced assertion.[88] Callahan argued that imperial powers acknowledged that mandates were not simply colonies and furthermore, the mandates system served as a 'permanent reminder' of the 'anti-imperialist and humanitarian condemnation' of European colonialism.[89] While conceding that the PMC was 'not a fierce critic of colonialism and had no intention of demolishing Europe's empires', Callahan advanced the argument that the PMC 'through informal connections' and 'the implied threat of international criticism' did in fact impact upon 'every level of European imperial rule'.[90]

In recent years, systematic scholarship on the mandates system has been undertaken. Most notably, Susan Pedersen has produced several articles and a book-length study of the PMC, making extensive use of its archives in Geneva. Pedersen agreed that although the

[86] Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (London, 2007), p. 315.
[87] H.A.L Fisher, *A History of Europe vol. III* (London, 1938), pp. 1207-8.
[88] Ibid., p. 2.
[89] Michael D. Callahan, ''Mandated Territories Are Not Colonies'': Britain, France and Africa in the 1930s' in R. M. Douglas, Michael D. Callahan and Elizabeth Bishop (eds.), *Imperialism on Trial: International Oversight of Colonial Rule in Historical Perspective* (Oxford, 2006), p. 13.
[90] Ibid., p. 21.

mandates system 'certainly aimed at legitimating and prolonging imperial rule'.[91] It nevertheless proved 'more disruptive than its framers intended'.[92] Furthermore, the PMC's published records and reports made it 'a magnet' for those wishing to challenge the rule of the mandatory power.[93] Pedersen has argued that the real significance of mandates was what she termed the 'internationalisation' of imperial rule. Thus, mandates system displaced 'some amount of conflict' over non-consensual rule into 'the international realm'.[94]

There has not been a substantial amount of scholarship produced on the specific question of the Labour Party and mandates in the interwar years. John Callaghan included a brief discussion in his book, noting that Labour (along with the LSI) welcomed the establishment of the mandates system, but also expressed concerns about the manner in which mandates had been allocated.[95] Significantly, Callaghan remarked that Labour had 'very little to say about the newly acquired empire in the Middle East'.[96] R.M Douglas also noted that within labour circles in the 1920s and 1930s, there was much criticism of the inadequacies of the mandates system and the demand to extend the remit of the PMC to 'all non-self-governing territories'.[97] In this study, Chapter Four will be dedicated to discussing socialist perspectives on the question of the mandates system, with particular focus on Palestine.

The International Labour Movement

The events of the First World War saw the idea of working-class internationalism gravely undermined, as the major European working-class parties fell in behind their respective nation-states and the Second International collapsed. However, Rhiannon Vickers points out that fragmentation was not absolute and the British Labour Party remained in contact with some European counterparts during the war, as they were united on three key issues,

[91] Susan Pedersen, 'The Impact of League Oversight on British Policy in Palestine' in Rory Miller (ed.), *Britain Palestine and Empire: The Mandate Years* (Farnham, 2010), p. 40.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Pedersen, 'The Meaning of Mandates: An Argument', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 32 (2006), p. 582; Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford, 2015), p. 4.
[95] John Callaghan, *The Labour Party and Foreign Policy: A History* (Oxford, 2007), p. 75.
[96] Ibid.
[97] R.M. Douglas, 'An Offer They Could Not Refuse: The British Left, Colonies and International Trusteeship, 1940-1951 in *Imperialism on Trial: International Oversight of Colonial Rule in Historical Perspective* (Oxford, 2006), p. 139.

namely, organised labour playing a key role in drawing up the post-war settlement, a new socialist body to replace the Second International and the creation of an international body to prevent war between states.[98]

During the interwar years, the international scene was often characterised not by national divisions, but by fundamental divisions within the ranks of the working-class movement, particularly between the reformist and the revolutionary sections. One of the most important manifestations of this separation was the rivalry between the Communist International or 'Comintern' (established in 1919) and the Labour and Socialist International (LSI) which was founded in 1923. Geoff Eley has noted how the Comintern played a key role in splitting national labour movements as after drawing up its twenty one conditions for membership, it 'cajoled the pro-Bolshevik left' into breaking with the non-revolutionary left by either expelling their opponents or forming a new party.[99] The situation was briefly further complicated by the inauguration of the so-called 'Second and a Half International' or 'Vienna International' which unsuccessfully attempted to bridge the gap between the two perspectives before folding in 1923.[100]

The Comintern has proved to be of particular interest to labour historians because, as Andrew Thorpe has written, 'never before and never since has a world party been created'.[101] Although, given that history is never written in an ideological vacuum, it seems reasonable to suppose that this can also be attributed to some extent to the prominent status of Marxist philosophy in labour history during the 1960s and 1970s.

The first comprehensive history of the institutional international labour movement was produced by John Price in 1947.[102] This book dealt almost exclusively with the LSI and concluded that whilst the LSI affiliates prioritised their respective national interests, the Comintern frequently ensured that international and national interests were subordinated to Soviet interests.[103] Therefore, according to Price, far from being a democratic 'world

[98] Rhiannon Vickers, *The Labour Party and the World: The Evolution of Labour's Foreign Policy 1900-1951* (Manchester, 2003), p. 70.
[99] Geoff Eley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe 1850-2000* (Oxford, 2002) p. 177.
[100] See Braunthal, *History of the International*, pp. 230-254.
[101] Andrew Thorpe, 'Comintern 'Control' of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1920-1943' *The English Historical Review* 118 (1998), p. 637.
[102] John Price, *The International Labour Movement* (Oxford, 1947).
[103] Franz L. Neuman, 'Review: The International Labour Movement by John Price', *Political Science Quarterly* 62 (1947), p. 139.

party', the Comintern was in fact Moscow-controlled. The view that national communist parties were Moscow-controlled continued to be advocated in the next three decades, by scholars on both the left and right wing of the political spectrum. Consequently, the mainstream outlook argued that Moscow's dominance was a disastrous development, most significantly when the Comintern formulated its 'class against class' theory which deemed social democrats 'social fascists' and thus effectively destroyed any chance of the labour movement forming a successful 'united front' against genuine fascism.[104] However, by the mid-1980s these assumptions began to be challenged and it was argued that whilst individual national parties were not entirely unaffected by Comintern policy, it was misguided to see the Comintern as the mechanism by which communists in all countries were in the words of Andrew Thorpe, 'marionettes… manipulated by their Kremlin puppet-master'.[105] Henceforth, historians such as Thorpe have pointed out that number of national communist parties did in fact enjoy a significant degree of autonomy. For instance, the Costa Rican Communist Party was deemed too unimportant for serious Comintern attention, whilst factors such as the necessity to make instant policy and inadequate communication networks allowed the Chinese Communist Party to exert a certain level of autonomy.[106] On the 'class against class' issue, Peter Huber has argued that rather than being Moscow-imposed, the policy was pushed for by leading members of national parties, particularly the CPGB.[107] Similarly, when the 'class against class' policy was abandoned, rather than 'a slavish and monolithic adherence to Moscow's wishes', the move actually sparked division in the British party.[108] Furthermore, the communist movement's anti-fascist record has been re-evaluated, for instance Matthew Worley has pointed out that in Germany 'there were moments of co-operation', which included communists and SPD members fighting street battles against the Nazis.[109]

Returning to the LSI, Christine Collette argues that the LSI should not be characterised exclusively by failure, as its inclusion of former allies and belligerents was in itself a

[104] E. H. Carr, *Twilight of the Comintern 1930-1935* (New York, 1982), pp. 45-103; Julius Braunthal, *History of the International: Volume 2 1914-1943* (London, 1967), pp. 532-533.
[105] Thorpe, 'Comintern 'Control' of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1920-1943', p. 642.
[106] Ibid., pp. 641-2.
[107] Peter Huber, 'Structure of the Moscow Apparatus of the Comintern and Decision-Making' in Tim Rees (ed.), *International Communism and the Communist International 1919-1943* (Manchester, 1999), p. 74.
[108] Ibid., p. 75.
[109] Matthew Worley, *In Search of Revolution: International Communist Parties in the Third Period* (London, 2004), pp. 14, 52 and 147.

genuine achievement.[110] Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the organisation suffered a major blow in 1933 when, as a result of the rise of fascism, it lost strong affiliates such as the German, Austrian and Czech parties.[111] Recent scholarship by Daniel Laqua has examined how the LSI argued for the democratisation of the international order.[112] In addition, a recent study by Talbot Imlay has emphasised the Eurocentric composition of the LSI.[113] Imlay has also analysed how the LSI engaged with the question of empire and with the anti-colonialist nationalist movements in the interwar period.[114]

An organisation which worked in close liaison with the LSI was the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU). This previously neglected social democratic institution was the subject of a recent study by Geert van Goethem.[115] He questioned the assessment of some authors who had argued that given that the international labour movement failed in its primary aim to preserve world peace and given that it is largely the story of organised social democracy betraying the ideals of working-class internationalism, it is hardly worth studying.[116] Van Goethem closely analysed the structure and strategy of the IFTU, arguing that one of the major flaws in its formation was the decision to compose the organisation from national federations rather than industrial ones as this proved to be the underlying reason for its failure to take international industrial action. Furthermore, the policy of admitting only one national federation from each county reinforced its 'closed character' and its refusal to work with other trade union internationals ensured division and conflict in the international working-class movement.[117] Additional faults were its inability to reach out beyond Western Europe to movements in colonial countries and its failure to forge close ties with the US labour movement.[118]

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[110] Christine Collette, 'Utopian Visions of Labour, Zionism, British Labour and the Labour and Socialist International in the 1930s' in Christine Collette and Stephen Bird (eds.) *Jews, Labour and the Left: 1918-48* (London, 2000), p. 73.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Daniel Laqua, 'Democratic Politics and the League of Nations: The Labour and Socialist International as a Protagonist of Interwar Internationalism', *Contemporary European History* 24 (2015), pp. 175-192.
[113] Talbot Imlay, 'Socialist Internationalism After 1914' in Patricia Clavin and Glenda Sluga (eds.), *Internationalisms: A Twentieth Century History* (Cambridge, 2017), p. 232.
[114] Talbot Imlay, *The Practice of Socialist Internationalism, European Socialists and International Politics, 1914-1960* (Oxford, 2018), pp. 229-235.
[115] Geert van Goethem, *The Amsterdam International: The World of the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), 1913-1945* (London, 2006).
[116] Ibid., p. 2.
[117] Ibid., p. 284.
[118] Ibid.

An organisation particularly relevant to this study is the Comintern-initiated transnational anti-colonial network the League Against Imperialism (LAI), which was founded in February 1927. The LAI has been discussed in several different contexts. In the British context, it appeared briefly in Brockway's memoirs as well as in some of the early biographies of Maxton.[119] It was also referred to in G.D.H. Cole's seminal *A History of the Labour Party from 1914*, first published in 1948, although the analysis of the ILP's involvement in the LAI was brief and superficial.[120] Brief mention was also made in some of the scholarly literature on the ILP leader James Maxton produced in the 1960s.[121] The LAI has also proved to be of great interest to Marxist historians. John Saville discussed the LAI in an essay on internationalism in interwar Britain, as well as in his biographical work on Reginald Bridgeman, an ILPer who served as secretary of its British section.[122] Jean Jones later produced an article for *Socialist History* (the successor to the Communist Party History Group) which chronicled the complex processes which led to the formation of the LAI and its activities for the entire duration of its existence, focusing primarily on the LAI's British section.[123]

The debate regarding the LAI has often revolved around the question of the extent and nature of communist involvement. For some historians, it was an example of one of many interwar communist fronts and its swift demise after a promising beginning was an instructive example of the damaging impact of the 'class against class' policy on left-wing unity.[124] However, Margaret Cole argued that while fronts like the National Minority Movement (NMM) were 'largely controlled by Communists or their fellow travellers', the LAI was 'nothing of the kind'.[125] For Andrew Williams, it was an example of the futility of

[119] Brockway, *Inside the Left* (London, 1945), pp. 168-169; Brockway, *Towards Tomorrow* (London, 1977), pp. 91-92; Gilbert McAlister, *James Maxton: Portrait of a Rebel* (London, 1935), p. 204 and p. 249; John McNair, *James Maxton: The Beloved Rebel* (London, 1955), pp. 80-84.
[120] G.D.H. Cole, *A History of the Labour Party From 1914* (London, 1948), p. 201.
[121] Arthur Marwick, 'James Maxton: His Place in Scottish Labour History', *The Scottish Historical Review* 43 (1964), pp. 25-43; Keith Middlemas, *The Clydesiders: A Struggle for Left Wing Parliamentary Power* (London, 1967), pp. 228-229.
[122] See Saville, 'Reginald Bridgeman: Anti-Imperialist' and 'The League Against Imperialism' in John Saville and Joyce M. Bellamy (eds.), *Dictionary of Labour Biography: volume 7* (London, 1984), pp. 26-38.
[123] Jean Jones, 'The League Against Imperialism', *Socialist History Occasional Pamphlet Series* No. 4 (London, 1996).
[124] Nicolas Owen, 'Critics of Empire in Britain' in Judith Brown and W. M. Roger Lois (eds.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: The Twentieth Century Vol. 4* (Oxford, 1999), p. 203.
[125] Margaret Cole, 'The Labour Movement Between the Wars' in David Martin (ed.), *Ideology and the Labour Movement: Essays Presented to John Saville* (London, 1979), p. 214.

the ILP's attempts to simultaneously work with the communist and social democratic movements in an effort to unite the two.[126]

Scholars of anti-colonialism have approached the LAI from a different perspective. Vijay Prashad criticised those authors 'who mention the [Brussels] conference simply to reduce it to a communist front organisation without any sense of the value that it held for those who travelled to it from Africa'.[127] Jonathan Derrick argued that far from this organisation being a Soviet creation, its organiser Willi Münzenberg had to push for its establishment 'against serious hesitations in Moscow'.[128] Moreover, Derrick highlighted the genuinely international composition (though not necessarily influence) of the organization as its founding conference hosted representatives from Tunisia, the West Indies, Egypt, India, Guadeloupe, South Africa and China.[129] For Stephen Howe, the LAI was not merely another communist front but the 'most significant attempt to establish an international anticolonial body between the wars'.[130]

In recent years, Fredrik Petersson has written extensively about the LAI, producing several articles and the first book-length study of the organisation. Petersson's studies have made extensive use of a variety of archival material, most notably the Comintern archive in Moscow and the LAI records held at the IISH. He too emphasised that analyses which presented the LAI as a 'mere mouthpiece for Soviet foreign policy', ignore the fact that the LAI 'did function as a source of experience and inspiration for both anti-colonial activists and the anti-colonial movement'.[131] He was also critical of some of the existing scholarship which he claimed had contributed to misunderstandings about the nature of the LAI. Petersson argued that the LAI is better understood as a communist 'sympathising' organisation rather than a front.[132] Talbot Imlay's recent study of the practice of socialist

[126] Andrew Williams, *Labour and Russia: The Attitude of the Labour Party to the USSR, 1924-1934* (Manchester, 1989), p. 50.
[127] Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A Biography of the Short Lived Third World* (New Delhi, 2007), p. 294, footnote 8.
[128] Jonathan Derrick, *Africa's 'Agitators': Militant Anti-Colonialism in Africa and the West: 1918-1939* (New York, 2008), p. 174.
[129] Ibid., pp. 175-176.
[130] Howe, *Anti-Colonialism in British Politics*, p. 71.
[131] Fredrik Petersson, *Willi Münzenberg, The League Against Imperialism, and the Comintern, 1925 – 1933* (Lampeter, 2013), p. 514.
[132] Ibid., p. 47.

internationalism has also discussed the impact of the LAI.[133] This study will not offer an authoritative account of the LAI's history. Rather, it seeks to examine the motives for ILP interaction with the emerging anti-colonial nationalist movements through its leadership's involvement in the LAI and what that reveals about its conception of internationalism.

Zionism

Historians have placed Zionism in various frameworks and, as we shall see, have even perceived this ideology in diametrically opposing ways. The picture is further complicated by the fact that Zionism was not a homogenous ideology, as Political Zionism, Labour Zionism and Cultural Zionism all emerged with distinct influences and ambitions.[134]

First published in the late 1960s, Maxime Rodinson's *Israel: A Settler Colonial State* was the earliest academic text to argue that Zionism was an unambiguously colonial movement, directly comparable to the French in Algeria.[135] Others followed, claiming that from the outset the movement was a self-professed colonial endeavour, as the Zionist organisations established in the late nineteenth century were called 'The Jewish Colonial Trust' and the 'Colonization Commission'.[136] This was a direct challenge to scholars who had argued that it was in fact an anti-imperialist movement, which had won its freedom through struggle against the British Empire.[137]

However, it was not until the late 1980s that the most significant intellectual shift developed, when with the opening up of the archives, a group of 'revisionist' Israeli historians emerged. Scholars such as Benny Morris, Tom Segev, Ilan Pappé and Avi Shlaim became known as the 'New Historians' or 'Post-Zionists', challenging mainstream Israeli historians who in the words of Morris 'were not real historians and did not produce real history'.[138] Instead, according to Segev, these 'Old Historians' had simply produced 'a national mythology'.[139]

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[133] Talbot Imlay, *The Practice of Socialist Internationalism: European Socialists and International Politics, 1914-1960* (Oxford, 2018), pp. 229-235.
[134] Elia Zureik, *The Palestinians in Israel: A Study in Internal Colonialism* (London, 1979), p. 37.
[135] Maxime Rodinson, *Israel: A Colonial Settler State* (New York, 1982), p. 62.
[136] Abdul-Wahab Kayyali, 'Zionism and Imperialism: The Historical Origins', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 6 (1977), p. 110.
[137] Rodinson, *Israel: A Colonial Settler State*, p. 28.
[138] Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem: 1947-49* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 6.
[139] Tom Segev, *1949: The First Israelis* (New York, 1998), p. vii

Although much of the work of the post-Zionist historians centred on 1948 and the creation of the State of Israel, many of their insights regarding Zionism were concerned with the key issues of the interwar period. For example, on the issue of population transfer Nur Masalha concluded that the *Yishuv* leadership pursued transfer schemes from the mid-1930s onwards and that Ben-Gurion and other leading Labour Zionists advocated 'forced' or 'compulsory' population transfer.[140] Morris argued that the transfer of Palestinian Arabs was 'inevitable and inbuilt into Zionism'.[141] These findings challenged the existing consensus that the idea of transfer only emerged as a discussion within Zionism in response to the recommendations drawn up by the Peel Commission in 1937, but never had any basis in mainstream Zionist thinking.[142]

Previously, historians had sought to emphasise that given the labour movement's central role in the nation-building process, the Zionist colonisation of Palestine could not be compared to 'classic' imperialism. Even Rodinson agreed with this assessment, writing that 'the socialist outlook that inspired a large part of the Yishuv… cannot be denied'.[143] Indeed, one of the main reasons offered by Yosef Gorni for British Labour's support of the Zionist project was the socialist nature of the *Yishuv* society.[144] Yet, according to post-Zionist scholar Zeev Sternhell, the Zionist labour movement were enthusiastic supporters of free-market capitalism in Mandatory Palestine because 'no social consideration was allowed to stand in the way of national interests'.[145] Therefore, the *Yishuv* became a 'typical bourgeois society with significant social and economic discrepancies' and despite the rhetoric of its leaders 'the national ideology of the Jewish Labour movement was to conquer as much land as possible'.[146]

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[140] Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of Transfer in Zionist Political Thought 1882-1948* (Washington DC, 1992), p. 2 and p. 118.
[141] Morris, *Palestinian Refugee Problem*, p. 6.
[142] Nur Masalha, 'Review of 'Fabricating Israeli History: The New Historians' by Efraim Karsh' *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 26 (1999), p. 348.
[143] Rodinson, *Israel*, p. 80.
[144] Yosef Gorni, 'Zionist Socialism and the Arab Question, 1918-1930', *Middle Eastern Studies* 13 (1977), p. 51.
[145] Zeev Sternhell, *The Founding Myths of Israel: Nationalism, Socialism and the Making of the Jewish State* (Princeton 1998), p. 6. Sternhell repeatedly emphasises how 'socialist', 'egalitarian' or 'universalist' policies were 'subordinated' to national concerns. See p. 7, p. 26, p. 120, p. 147, p. 150, p. 151, p. 177, p. 198, p. 229, p. 288.
[146] Sternhell, pp. 5-6.

Furthermore, the kibbutz system, held up as the embodiment of the socialist society, far from stemming from socialist ideology was in fact a means of creating an ethnically exclusive community.[147] As Paul Kelemen has elucidated, 'socialist principles would have demanded class solidarity across the ethnic division in Palestine not the formation of enclaves for the exclusive employment of Jewish workers'.[148] Baruch Kimmerling, a sociologist by training, also questioned the socialist nature of the kibbutz system, arguing instead that it was largely developed as a means of ensuring security during flashpoints of Palestinian Arab nationalism.[149]

Both Gershon Shafir and Kimmerling independently concluded that Zionism was more closely related to the classic colonial settler model 'than previous histories had allowed'.[150] As Ilan Pappé has commented, the recent works by both western and 'revisionist' Israeli historians have concluded that interwar Zionist land and labour policy was 'determined solely by a narrow-minded nationalism' with 'little or no trace of any socialist, Marxist or altruistic attitude of any kind towards the Palestinian worker or peasant'.[151] Indeed, Pappé deemed the Zionist labour movement responsible for instituting and implementing 'the ethnic cleansing of the local population'.[152] Such findings were in sharp contrast to the pre-existing historiography which characterised the mandatory period as one of 'Zionist goodwill foolishly rejected by Palestinian intransigence'.[153] Thus, as S. Illan Troen has written, 'in Israeli historiography, Zionist settlement is increasingly viewed as a form of European imperialism'.[154]

However, the revisionist challenge was inevitably met with severe criticism. In *Fabricating Israeli History: The New Historians*, Efraim Karsh accused these scholars of

[147] Rodinson, for example characterised the kibbutz system as 'undeniably socialist'. See Rodinson, *Israel and the Arabs* (1982), p. 42.
[148] Paul Kelemen, 'Zionist Historiography and its Critics: A Case of Myth-taken Identity?' *Economy and Society* 27 (1998), p. 356.
[149] Baruch Kimmerling, *Zionism and Territory: The Socio-Territorial Dimensions of Zionist Politics* (1983); Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict 1882-1914* (Cambridge, 1989).
[150] Stephen Howe, 'The Politics of Historical Revisionism: Comparing Ireland and Israel/Palestine', *Past and Present* 168 (2000), p. 235.
[151] Ilan Pappé, 'Review of *The Roots of Separatism in Palestine: British Economic Policy 1920-29* by Barbara Smith', *International History Review* 16 (1993), pp. 610-11.
[152] Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford, 2006), p. 13.
[153] Pappé, 'Review', p. 610.
[154] S. Illan Troen, 'Frontier Myths and Their Applications in America and Israel: A Transnational Perspective', *Journal of American History* 86 *The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History: A Special Issue* (1999), p. 1210.

'deliberate... historical distortion' and engaging in 'partisan re-writing of history'.[155] A recent work by Jonathan Adelman criticised the approach of the post-Zionists and reiterated the idea of 'the socialist Zionist revolution', arguing that Zionism was 'both a national liberation movement and a social revolution'.[156] Therefore, the historiography falls into two broad perspectives; those who write from a post-Zionist viewpoint and those who reject this outlook. As we have seen, the exchanges between these two positions are often of a polemical nature.

In more recent scholarship, the phenomenon of anti-Zionism has begun to acquire a more prominent status as a category of analysis. In his study *Divided Against Zion: Anti-Zionist Opposition in Britain to a Jewish State in Palestine,* which examined British anti-Zionism in the period immediately after the Second World War, Rory Miller sought to address the fact that 'anti-Zionism as an issue in and of itself, has been viewed as a minor adjunct in the history of the Palestine question and the Zionist movement'.[157] As a result of this, in Miller's view 'there has been little written on either the subject of anti-Zionism in general or the anti-Zionist effort in Britain in particular'.[158] Kelemen concurred with this analysis, noting that 'The pre-1948 advocates of the Zionist position in Britain have been discussed extensively if often uncritically… but the coverage of their opponents particularly in relation to the impact of Zionism on the Arab world has been much more patchy'.[159] However, Miller argued that this oversight is 'somewhat understandable' and primarily attributes this development to the fact that anti-Zionism from Herzl to the founding of the State of Israel was 'to a large extent a reaction and response to Zionism' with 'no programme of its own' and 'no clear goals'.[160] Nevertheless, in this study, due attention will be given to the anti-Zionist perspective within the interwar ILP.

Scholar of anti-colonialism Stephen Howe took a fresh approach to the development of Israeli historiography by comparing it to the trajectory of the writing of Irish history. Here,

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[155] Efraim Karsh, *Fabricating History: The New Historians* (London, 1997), Preface to the revised second edition, xix.
[156] Jonathan R. Adelman, *The Rise of Israel: A History of a Revolutionary State* (Oxford, 2008), p. 9.
[157] Rory Miller, *Divided Against Zion*: *Anti-Zionist Opposition in Britain to a Jewish State in Palestine 1945-1948* (London, 2000), p. 1.
[158] Ibid., p. 1. A deeply critical study of left-wing anti-Zionism is Robert S. Wistrich (ed.), *The Left Against Zionism: Communism, Israel and the Middle East* (London, 1979).
[159] Kelemen, 'British Communists and the Palestine Conflict, 1929-1948', *Holy Land Studies: A Multidisciplinary Journal* 5 (2006), p. 132.
[160] Miller, *Divided Against Zion,* p. 1.

Howe was able to identify several definite similarities. Both were originally nationalist historiographies, which had 'accompanied and in some sense become the official narratives of successful state-building projects'.[161] Furthermore, in both the Republic of Ireland and Israel 'a generation or two after the establishment of their states, their official self-presentation came under challenge from some historians'.[162] Moreover, as we have already discussed in the case of Israel, these scholars brought a new sense of professional and critical analysis which questioned the nationalist narrative and also challenged notions that historical developments in that locality were without parallel elsewhere. Additionally, these revisionists often gave what Howe terms 'unfamiliarly empathetic attention' to the histories of 'the other side'.[163]

British Labour and Zionism

Much of the early literature relating to British Labour and Zionism in the interwar period examined the policies of the Labour governments in administering mandatory Palestine in 1924 and 1929-31, rather than assessing the discourse of the movement as a whole; for instance evaluating Passfield's White Paper, which it has been argued, signalled a policy shift away from the Balfour Declaration.[164] A notable exception to this was *The British Labour Movement and Zionism* by Yosef Gorni which discussed in detail the attitudes of the Labour movement from the Balfour declaration to the creation of the State of Israel. Gorni not only analysed Labour's foreign policy in Palestine, but also the attitudes of the Labour press, Labour intellectuals and politicians. This included a discussion of the views of leading ILPers in the 1930s.[165] At the outset of this study he argued that the Labour movement was ideologically inclined to support Zionism and therefore the most pertinent question to ask is why the Zionist movement was 'dealt one of its most bitter blows' by Labour in the form of Passfield's White Paper.[166]

However, Paul Kelemen, a prolific scholar on the subject of the labour movement and Zionism, has challenged this interpretation, arguing that on a purely philosophical basis

[161] Stephen Howe, 'The Politics of Historical Revisionism: Comparing Ireland and Israel/Palestine', *Past and Present* 168 (2000), p. 229.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Ibid., p. 237.
[164] Gary Sheffer, 'Intentions and Results of British Policy in Palestine: Passfield's White Paper', *Middle Eastern Studies* 9 (1973), pp. 43-60.
[165] Yosef Gorni, *The British Labour Movement and Zionism 1917-1948* (London 1983), p. xii.
[166] Ibid., p. xii.

Labour could have pursued an anti-Zionist policy.[167] Therefore, in one of his own studies, Kelemen explored the empirical reasons why a pro-Zionist stance prevailed, examining factors such as (but not limited to) the influence of *Poale Zion* (which affiliated to Labour in 1920) and the belief in some quarters of the party that support for Zionism would help secure the support of the Jewish electorate in Britain.[168] Kelemen was not alone in criticising Gorni's study. Reviewing *The British Labour Movement and Zionism*, Zachary Lockman concluded that Gorni's 'uncritical acceptance of the morality and justice of the Zionist cause prevent him from getting to the heart of the matter' because 'he cannot understand and hence cannot seriously explain' Labour's 'very real dilemma' over Palestine.[169] Stephen Howe has also questioned Gorni's objectivity, noting that his work is written from a 'strongly pro-Zionist standpoint'.[170]

Kelemen has noted that the perceived socialism of the Zionist communities in Palestine was not the only factor in attracting support from elements of the labour movement, concluding that some senior Labourites backed Zionism precisely because it was reminiscent of British colonialism.[171] European factors played a role in determining Labour's policy on Palestine. For example, with the rise of European fascism, key Labourites such as Herbert Morrison saw Arab nationalism not as a form of anti-colonial self-determination, but as a movement engineered by the agents of Hitler and Mussolini.[172] Furthermore, the Nazi persecution of Jews in the 1930s convinced many in Labour of the urgent necessity of creating a Jewish homeland.[173]

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[167] Paul Kelemen, 'Zionism and The British Labour Party 1917-39', *Social History* 21 (1996), p. 71. In addition, Kelemen has written a book *The British Left and Zionism: A History of A Divorce* (Manchester, 2012) as well as several articles and book chapters on this subject. See Kelemen, 'Labour Ideals and Colonial Pioneers: Wedgewood, Morrison and Zionism', *Labour History Review* 61 (1996), pp. 31-47; 'In the Name of Socialism: Zionism and European Social Democracy in the Interwar Years', *International Review of Social History* 41 (1996) pp. 331- 350; 'Looking the Other Way: The British Labour Party, Zionism and the Palestinians', in Christine Collette and Stephen Bird (eds.), *Jews, Labour and the Left: 1918-48* (London, 2000), pp. 141-157; 'British Communists and the Palestine Conflict, 1929-1948', *Holy Land Studies: A Multidisciplinary Journal* 5 (2006), pp. 131-153.
[168] Ibid., p. 77. and p. 83.
[169] Zachary Lockman, 'Review of The British Labour Movement and Zionism 1917-1948 (London, 1983) by Y. Gorni', *Middle East Journal* 48 (1984), p. 136.
[170] Howe, *Anti-Colonialism in British Politics*, p. 148, note 9.
[171] Paul Kelemen, 'Looking the Other Way: The British Labour Party, Zionism and the Palestinians', in Christine Collette and Stephen Bird (eds.), *Jews, Labour and the Left: 1918-48* (London, 2000), p. 147.
[172] Ibid.
[173] Ibid., p, 148.

Another highly relevant study is an unpublished PhD thesis by Andrew Sargent, completed at the University of Nottingham in 1980. This piece of work has been largely overlooked in the published literature dealing with British labour and Zionism. Therefore, we will outline in some detail the findings of Sargent's study. In it, he contends that the history of the Labour Party and Palestine before 1945 'is a history of growing attachment to the cause of Zionism'.[174] This process was achieved chiefly through the arguments of Labour Zionism. However, emotional and personal factors also came into play, such as the memories of the plight of Jewish refugees who arrived in the UK and the 'potent references' to the building of a 'New Jerusalem' which struck a chord with religious-minded Labourites.[175] The friendships between key British Labourites and leading Labour Zionists and the glowing reports produced by labour politicians after visiting Palestine were also decisive in ensuring continued Labour support for Zionism.[176]

As well as the intellectual arguments, Zionism was successful institutionally. Sargent points out that *Poale Zion* was, 'the only affiliated group seeking to influence a specific issue of foreign policy'.[177] Crucially, as an affiliated group, it could submit resolutions to Labour's annual conference and to gain the attention of the NEC. In addition, the main Labour Zionist party in Palestine *Mapai* and the trade union organisation *Histadrut* both forged close ties with the British Labour Party. Therefore, after Passfield's White Paper of 1930, 'there was scarcely a resolution or statement of policy which was not initiated or shaped by Labour Zionists'.[178] In fact, Sargent concludes that Labour Zionists held more sway over the NEC than did the Imperial Advisory Committee.[179] The Palestinian Arabs by contrast, had no comparable links or influence.[180]

Poale Zion (Workers of Zion) had its roots in Eastern Europe during the late nineteenth century, with the first group established in 1897.[181] By 1905, *Poale Zion* groups had been set up by members of the Jewish community in several British cities before an inaugural

[174] Andrew Sargent, 'The British Labour Party and Palestine 1917-1949', PhD Thesis (University of Nottingham, 1980), p. 374.
[175] Ibid., p. 375.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid., p. 379.
[178] Ibid., p. 379.
[179] Ibid., p. 381.
[180] Kelemen, *The British Left and Zionism*, p. 4.
[181] Mitchell Cohen, *Zion and State: Nation, Class and the Shaping of Modern Israel* (New York, 1992), p. 89.

conference was held in Manchester in 1906.[182] After its affiliation to the Labour Party in 1920, it focused its energies on lobbying Labour politicians and found 'significant support in the Labour Party'.[183]

Links were forged beyond Labour Zionism. For example, The English Zionist Federation (EZF), founded in 1899, was a prominent organisation which, as we will see, some Labour politicians engaged with during the interwar period. The EZF grew considerably in the years following the Balfour Declaration, and by 1921 had 30,000 members, with Chaim Weizmann serving as its leader from 1917 to 1924.[184]

But not all Jewish political organizations were Zionist. Significantly, the Polish Bund, which had emerged out of the Bundist movement in Tsarist Russia, was a socialist Jewish organisation that was stridently anti-Zionist.[185] Although the Bund did not formally affiliate to either international until 1930, it engaged with developments within the LSI throughout the 1920s and was deeply critical of the pro-Zionist pronouncements of leading figures such as Vandervelde and Blum.[186] Furthermore, Russian Bundist Raphael Abramovich served on the executive of the LSI as a representative of the exiled Mensheviks.[187]

The link between Jewish political activism and the British labour movement has generated considerable scholarly interest. This can be seen by the publication of an edited volume published in 2000 entitled *Jews, Labour and the Left 1918-48*. Of particular relevance is a chapter by Christine Collette, 'The Utopian Visions of Labour Zionism, British Labour and the Labour and Socialist International in the 1930s'. According to Collette, Labour's commitment to Zionism was so strong that 'the Labour Party files rarely record so consistent a pursuit of policy'.[188] Support for Zionism was seen by British Labour as 'an

[182] Geoffrey Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (Oxford, 1992), p. 175.
[183] Kelemen, *The British Left and Zionism*, p. 4.
[184] Ibid.
[185] Yosef Gorni, *Converging Alternatives: The Bund and the Zionist Labour Movement: 1897-1985* (New York, 2006), p. 85.
[186] Mario Kessler, 'The Bund and the Labour and Socialist International' in Jack Jacobs (ed.), *Jewish Politics in Eastern Europe: The Bund at 100* (Basingstoke, 2001), pp. 187-8.
[187] Braunthal, *History of the International*, pp. 265-7.
[188] Christine Collette, 'The Utopian Visions of Labour Zionism, British Labour and the Labour and Socialist International in the 1930s' in Christine Collette and Stephen Bird (eds.), *Jews, Labour and the Left: 1918-48* (London, 2000), p. 78.

expression of internationalism' thus, 'illustrating the complexity and the interrelationship of ideas of nationalism and internationalism'.[189] Collette introduced two new themes into the scholarly discourse on Zionism and Labour, namely 'utopia' and 'gender'.[190] The support of both British Labour and the LSI was 'utopian' in character, in the sense of Lucy Sargisson's definition of Utopia as 'an imaginary space that our thoughts inhabit, allowing us to critique our present time and place'.[191] Collette found that a common theme to British, International and Zionist Labour was that these movements all failed to properly include women and ensure their equal treatment.[192] Collette however, neglects to explore the phenomenon of anti-Zionism. This study will examine how both support for and opposition to Zionism could be expressions of internationalism.

Unlike many other areas of historical inquiry, this question has drawn the attention of academics from outside the discipline of history. Most notably Kelemen, who has written a book and seven articles on various aspects of labour and Zionism, is a sociologist, as is Philip Mendes, whose work on the Australian labour movement and Zionism also examines the responses of British labour.[193] Political scientists interested in the discipline of international relations such as John Chiddick have also explored these questions, which is perhaps understandable given that Israel-Palestine conflict remains one of the most prominent contemporary political issues. In the opinion of Chiddick, British Labour's commitment to Zionism was 'not the product of strong engagement or with extensive knowledge of the region'.[194] Placing responses in the context of anti-colonialism and thus contrasting responses to nationalism in India and Africa, Chiddick noted that Labour's relationship with Arab nationalism was 'marked by a greater ambivalence, especially with regard to Palestine'.[195]

Although certainly the most important electoral expression of the Labour movement, the Labour Party was not the movement's sum total, as the Communist Party emerged as a political force during the interwar years. According to Raphael Samuel, despite its

[189] Ibid., p. 82
[190] Ibid., pp. 72-73
[191] Ibid., p. 71.
[192] Ibid., p. 74, p, 77 and p. 81.
[193] Philip Mendes, 'The Australian Left's Support for the Creation of the State of Israel', Labour *History* (*Australia)* 97 (2009), pp. 137-148.
[194] John Chiddick, 'Palestine, Anti-colonialism and Social Democracy: The Case of the British Labour Party', *Australian Political Science Association Conference Proceedings* (Brisbane, 2002), p. 1.
[195] Ibid.

relatively small size, 'the CPGB exercised a gravitational pull on the British left, a force field whose influence it was impossible to escape'.[196] There was a fundamental division between Labour and the CPGB over the issue of Zionism. As June Edmunds has written, in the years following the First World War reformist socialists 'began increasingly to acknowledge Jewish national self-determination' and believed Zionism to be 'compatible with democracy and progress'.[197] The communist left on the other hand were hostile to Zionism because as a form of 'bourgeois nationalism' it was in opposition to its 'commitment to internationalism'.[198] Furthermore, Walid Sharif points out that both Lenin and Stalin had almost always regarded the Zionist movement as 'spearheading British imperialism in the Middle East'.[199] Kelemen makes the insightful point that the communists' position is worthy of study as its characterisation of Zionism as a colonial movement continues to resonate in contemporary academic discourse.[200] Indeed, this cannot be attributed to the prominence of Marxists in Israeli academia given that, as Stephen Howe has pointed out, with the exception of Ilan Pappé, none of the key post-Zionist historians had any Marxist leanings.[201]

The link between British communism and Jewish political activism was also explored in Stephen Bird's and Christine Collette's edited volume. For instance, Deborah Osmond argued that many British Jews saw the new Soviet republic and not Palestine as 'the safest haven against political anti-Semitism'.[202] Jason Heppel noted that the CPGB had numerous Jewish activists in key organisational positions and by 1936 the party had established a Jewish Bureau.[203] Approximately 7% of the CPGB's full time employees that staffed 'the party hierarchy and positions of leadership' were Jewish, at a time when Jews constituted less than 1% of the British population.[204] Elsewhere, Kelemen has highlighted how the Communist Party viewed developments in Palestine as 'proof' of their 'social fascism'

[196] Raphael Samuel, 'Staying Power: The Lost World of British Communism' *New Left Review* 156 (1986), pp. 63-113.
[197] June Edmunds, *The Left and Israel: Party Policy Change and Internal Democracy* (London, 2000), p. 8.
[198] Edmunds, *The Left and Israel*, p. 9.
[199] Walid Sharif, 'Soviet Marxism and Zionism' *Journal of Palestine Studies* (1997) p. 96.
[200] Kelemen 'British Communists and the Palestine Conflict', p. 132.
[201] Howe, 'Politics of Revisionism', p. 238.
[202] Deborah Osmond, 'British Jewry and Labour Politics 1918-39' in Christine Collette and Stephen Bird (eds.) *Jews, Labour and the Left: 1918-48* (2000), p. 62.
[203] Jason Heppel, 'A Question of 'Jewish Politics'? The Jewish Section of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1936-45' in Christine Collette and Stephen Bird (eds.), *Jews, Labour and the Left: 1918-48* (London, 2000), p. 98.
[204] Ibid., p. 98.

theory.[205] However, the communist and social democratic analyses did have some overlap, as like Labour, the CPGB were deeply critical of the Palestinian Arab leaders, who were believed to be 'treacherous feudal-bourgeois leaders' who were 'deceiving their followers'.[206]

International Labour and Zionism

While much attention has been accorded to British Labour and Zionism, less has been given to the link between it and the international socialist democratic movement. Only Kelemen, Collette and Sargent have engaged with this issue in any substantial detail. Consequently, it is the work of these scholars that will be considered in this section. Kelemen has noted that the debate on Zionism in the LSI shifted profoundly after the First World War. Prior to the conflict, the discussions had focused on Europe and arguments for and against Jewish assimilation into the working class. However, after the war the debate focused on the society that the Zionist movement proposed to build in Palestine.[207] He concluded that there was barely any opposition to Zionism from the European socialist movement during the interwar years. This was not because of the intervention of *Poale Zion* in terms of its propaganda and lobbying efforts, but was in fact due to social democracy's receptiveness to the ideology of Labour Zionism.[208] One reason for this openness lay in the fact that it was 'in essential respects the antithesis of Bolshevik socialism' as it rejected the notion of the dictatorship of the proletariat and believed in the reconciliation of nationalism and socialism.[209] A more important reason however was that the 'right-wing' of the Second International came to dominate the post-war era. Therefore, in terms of its colonial policy, Labour Zionism was seen as a form of 'positive' or 'benign' colonialism.[210] Thus, because of the perceived benign 'universalism' of Labour Zionism, Palestinian Arab hostility to Zionism was seen as reactionary, motivated only by feudal, narrow, religious interests.[211] In fact, as Collette noted, the LSI viewed Arab nationalism to

[205] Paul Kelemen, 'British Communists and the Palestine Conflict, 1929-1948', *Holy Land Studies: A Multidisciplinary Journal* 5 (2006), p. 134.
[206] Ibid., p. 135.
[207] Paul Kelemen, 'In the Name of Socialism: Zionism and European Social Democracy in the Interwar Years', *International Review of Social History* 41 (1996), pp. 331- 350.
[208] Ibid., p. 336.
[209] Ibid., p. 336.
[210] Ibid.
[211] Ibid., p. 345.

be 'poisoned by German and Italian fascism'.[212] Again, as with the British Labour Party, expedience played an important part in influencing policy. European social democrats feared that mass resettlement of Jewish refugees in Europe would strengthen popular anti-Semitism, which in turn, would enable the fascists to capture social democracy's working-class electoral base. Therefore, Palestine presented itself as a preferable solution.[213] Hence, it appears fair to conclude that for Kelemen, the attitudes of European labour essentially mirrored those of British labour.

Sargent noted that the split in the international movement impacted upon the Zionist labour movement, as *Poale Zion* was deeply divided over which international to join. This led to the formation of the *Jewish Communist Union Poale Zion*, which affiliated to the Comintern. However, the Comintern soon demanded that these members joined their respective national Communist parties.[214] The 'right wing' of the party then participated in the 'second and a half international' in 1921 before finally being admitted into the LSI in 1924. This was a major gain for the Zionists as *Poale Zion* had been rejected by the pre-war Socialist International. In addition, the *Histadrut* affiliated to the IFTU.[215] Therefore, Sargent concluded that the Zionists' success within the British Labour Party 'was mirrored and re-enforced by their success within the wider International Socialist movement'.[216] As with the British labour movement, the Palestinian Arabs had no influence comparable to that of the Zionists. To support this claim, Sargent quoted from a contemporary Zionist activist who wrote 'we have been able to entrench ourselves in the international councils, from the Geneva League to the Socialist International before the Arabs ever entered the scene'.[217] Therefore, in contrast to Kelemen, Sargent has stressed the importance of the lobbying activity of *Poale Zion* rather than the attractiveness of Labour Zionism as an ideology.

Regarding the Comintern, as Joel Benin has pointed out, 'throughout the era of the British mandate in Palestine the international communist movement regarded Zionism as a settler-

[212] Christine Collette, 'The Utopian Visions of Labour Zionism, British Labour and the Labour and Socialist International in the 1930s' in Christine Collette and Stephen Bird (eds.), *Jews, Labour and the Left: 1918-48* (London, 2000), p. 87.
[213] Ibid.
[214] Sargent, 'British Labour Party and Palestine', pp. 64-74.
[215] Ibid., p. 72.
[216] Ibid., p. 74.
[217] Ibid.

colonial movement expropriating the rights of the indigenous population in alliance with British imperialism'.[218] On the issue of Zionism, the CPGB did not deviate from the Moscow line.

Labour and Anti-Semitism

The issue of anti-Semitism and the British Labour movement has been explored in the existing historiography. The main focus of this has been the anti-Semitic rhetoric espoused by some Labourites in the context of the Boer War and Jewish immigration into Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Historians have been divided over the prevalence. For example, Colin Holmes has argued that its extent has been overstated by some scholars.[219] As we have seen, there has been some attention paid to anti-Semitism in relation to Zionism, mainly in terms of explaining hostility to Zionism. But some subsequent literature has also explored the relationship between pro-Zionist thought and anti-Semitism. As previously noted, Kelemen has examined how advocacy of Zionism by the mainstream labour movement in the 1930s was motivated in part by a desire to avoid large-scale Jewish immigration into Britain. David Cesarani has also addressed the question, demonstrating how support for Labour Zionism could coexist with a certain form of anti-Semitism.[220]

Chapter five of this study aims to explore the relationship between anti-Semitism and pro and anti-Zionist perspectives. For example, it will examine in detail the impact of violent anti-Semitic persecution in Eastern Europe after the First World War and the rise of fascism in Europe in the 1930s on the discourse regarding Palestine. It is necessary to engage with several historiographies in order to properly explore the question of the ILP's perspectives on Mandatory Palestine and this study will continue to draw on and critically analyse the secondary literature throughout the course of the various chapters.

[218] Joel Benin, *Was the Red Flag Flying There? Marxist Politics and the Arab Israeli Conflict* (London, 1990), p. 24.
[219] Colin Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society, 1876-1939* (London, 1979), p. 24.
[220] David Cesarani, 'Anti-Zionism in Britain, 1922 – 2002: Continuities and Discontinuities', in Jeffrey Hersh (ed.), *Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism in Historical Perspective: Convergence and Divergence* (Oxford, 2007), p. 125.

Chapter 1: The Internationalisms of the ILP in the Interwar Years

The self-identification with and pursuit of 'internationalism', although interpreted in various ways, was a defining feature of the labour movement and its most important electoral expression, the Labour Party, reflected this. Conversely, despite Britain's participation in the League of Nations, its treaties with other nations and the maintenance of the British Empire, leading figures in the Conservative Party displayed a definite aversion to any kind of overtly internationalist agenda. As the party's most important figure in the interwar period, Stanley Baldwin, commented, 'I do not myself know what the word 'internationalism' means. All I know is that when I hear it employed it is a bad thing for this country'.[1] As Norman Angell observed, Labour was 'by doctrine internationalist' and 'seemed to mean business about its internationalism in a way which the Conservatives did not'.[2] Instead, the Tory party positioned itself as 'patriotic' and by portraying Labour as the opposite, was able to inflict serious damage upon Labour's electoral performances, most notably in 1918 and 1924.[3]

Nevertheless, Labour persisted with its policy which in official terms centred on the necessity of international cooperation and securing peace.[4] However, the picture is a complicated one, as the Labour Party was far from a monolithic entity. Rhiannon Vickers has identified five 'streams' of influence, namely the ILP; the trade union movement; the Social Democratic Federation and other Marxist groups; the Fabians and the radical Liberals, epitomised by the Union of Democratic Control. These contributed to the creation of two central 'internationalisms': liberal internationalism and socialist internationalism.[5] This chapter focuses on one of these sections, the ILP, which has been described as Labour's most 'fervently' internationalist element.[6] It was certainly true that influential ILPers saw the resolution of international problems to be just as crucial as solving domestic questions. As E. D. Morel wrote in 1922:

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[1] Quoted in David Thomson, *England in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1971), p. 98.
[2] Norman Angell, *After All: The Autobiography of Norman Angell* (London,1951), p. 229
[3] For the 1918 general election see Nigel Keohane, *The Party of Patriotism: The Conservative Party and the First World War* (2010), p. 119. On the eve of the 1924 election, one Conservative argued 'Anyone who voted for Labour tomorrow was voting for handing over this country to the Communists and to Moscow.' Quoted in Richard W. Lyman, *The First Labour Government* (London, 1957), p. 259.
[4] Caroline Knowles, *Race, Discourse and Labourism* (London, 1992), p. 29.
[5] Rhiannon Vickers, *The Labour Party and the World* (Manchester, 2003), p. 9.
[6] David Howell, *A Lost Left: Three Studies in Socialism and Nationalism* (Manchester, 1986), p. 270.

> … the Labour Party has two supreme aims: the raising of the standards of life… and, which has become essential to the very existence of the state, the exercise of the full national influence in the councils of the world on behalf of international reconstruction, reconciliation and enduring peace, based upon a realisation of the economic interdependence of nations, and upon the common needs and aspirations of mankind.[7]

This chapter will explore in detail the nature of the ILP's internationalism, identifying change and continuity over time and examining its relations both nationally and internationally, with the rest of labour movement. An understanding of the ILP's perspectives on internationalism is crucial to understanding its engagement with Zionism because, as later chapters will show, arguments regarding the status and future of Palestine were framed largely in relation to internationalist principles. There will be a particular focus on the issue of empire as this is especially pertinent given Palestine's status in the interwar period.

Internationalism Before the First World War, 1892-1914

The ILP was founded in 1893 with the immediate goal of representing domestic working-class concerns at municipal and parliamentary level. The national organisation was formed from 'the bottom up' after the coming together of local parties which had stressed their political independence and rejected the idea that working class interests could be secured through the 'Lib-Lab' representatives of the Liberal Party or via working-class Toryism.[8] Keir Hardie's election to parliament in 1892 then galvanised the movement as 44 new ILP branches were established within eight months of Hardie's victory.[9]

Despite prioritising domestic issues, the party's early literature and propaganda nevertheless expressed explicit, if rather broad, internationalist sentiments.[10] A pamphlet written by ILP secretary Tom Mann in 1897 concluded with the declaration that:

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[7] 'The Party at Work: In the Constituencies', *New Leader*, 10 November 1922.
[8] David Howell, *British Workers and the Independent Labour Party, 1888-1906* (Manchester, 1983), p. 283.
[9] Stephen Yeo, 'A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain, 1883-1896', *History Workshop* 4 (1977), p. 28.
[10] Several scholars have noted that Hardie was reluctant to make foreign policy pronouncements that might jeopardise or compromise his commitment to the cause of labour at home. See Rhiannon Vickers, *The Labour Party and the World*, p. 35. Bruce Glasier too worried how opposition to the Boer War might adversely affect the ILP's electoral fortunes. See Kevin J. Callahan, *Demonstration Culture: European Socialism and the Second International: 1889-1914* (London, 2010), p. 208. Even by 1907, Hardie deemed

> The Independent Labour Party ever upholds the solidarity of all workers, regardless of race and nationality…. It looks forward with confident hope to the International organisation of Labour, and echoes the cry, whose realisation means the complete downfall of capitalism, and the final triumph of Democracy – WORKERS, OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE.[11]

Moreover, this commitment was not simply confined to rhetoric but operated on a variety of practical levels. In 1896, Mann was instrumental in the formation of the International Federation of Ship, Dock and River Workers, which later became the International Transport Workers' Federation, and served as its first president.[12] So committed was Mann to this international project that he offered his resignation as ILP secretary in order to make it his primary focus.[13] Links were forged with the international labour movement as prominent ILP figures such as Hardie, Ramsay MacDonald and Glasier represented Britain at conferences of the International Socialist Bureau, as well as at conferences of the Second International in the years prior to the war.[14] There was also a colonial dimension. In 1907, ILP leader Hardie embarked upon a speaking tour of the US, Canada, South Africa and Australia, as well as visiting India and publishing a book about his experiences there.[15] In addition to his connections with Labourites based in European countries, Hardie also made links with nationalist movements within the British empire. For instance, he befriended leading Indian nationalist Bipin Chandra Pal, who was invited to speak at the ILP's annual conference.[16]

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foreign affairs to be 'merely incidental to the real work of the party'. See R. M. Douglas, *The Labour Party, Nationalism and Internationalism: 1939-1951*(London, 2004), p. 17.

[11] Tom Mann, *The Independent Labour Party: Its History and Policy* (London, 1897), n.p.

[12] Joseph L. White, *Tom Mann* (Manchester, 1991), p. 103.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Hardie's first involvement in the formal international labour movement was as far back as 1888 when he attended and spoke at the International Trades Union Congress. He then attended the 1889 International Socialist Workers congress in Paris and the International Miners' Congress in 1890. See Chris Wrigley, 'The European Context: Aspects of British Labour and Continental Socialism' in Matthew Worley (ed.), *The Foundations of the British Labour Party: Identities, Cultures and Perspectives 1900-39* (London, 2009), p. 89.

[15] Jonathan Hyslop, 'The World Voyage of Keir Hardie: Indian Nationalism, Zulu Insurgency and the British Labour Diaspora 1907-1908', *Journal of Global History* 1 (2006), pp. 343-362; James Keir Hardie, *India: Impressions and Suggestions* (London, 1910).

[16] Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London, 1984), p. 270.

Internationalism manifested itself in other ways as the party actively campaigned against the Boer War.[17] The rationale for this was summed up by Glasier who stated, 'our party, being a socialist, and therefore a democratic party, maintains the principle that no nation can govern another'.[18] The significance of this particular underlying principle is that it reflected the influence of the liberal tradition upon the ILP's early internationalism. Consequently, this standard was extended to other international questions. As Hardie explicitly stated, while in India he became convinced of John Stuart Mill's dictum that 'such a thing as a government of one people by another does not and cannot exist'.[19]

Another expression came in the form of anti-racism. The ILP rejected an affiliation attempt by its South African counterpart on the basis that the latter's racist advocacy of an exclusively white suffrage was at odds with the British party's notion of 'universal brotherhood'.[20] Meanwhile, in parliament, efforts were made to secure political rights for non-white people in South Africa.[21] Hardie's visit there provoked a violent response when he spoke out against racial discrimination within the trade union movement. His writings on India denounced 'the colour bar' and angrily documented incidents of white racism against Indians.[22]

At this time, in the absence of a particularly detailed party policy, leading individual figures such as Hardie were responsible for setting the tone of the ILP's internationalism and establishing its internationalist reputation. Ramsay MacDonald travelled to South Africa and India and subsequently produced accounts of his experiences.[23] Indeed, for MacDonald, who would later serve as Labour's first ever Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, international issues were never peripheral concerns. This was illustrated when

[17] See Deian Hopkins 'Socialism and Imperialism: The ILP Press and the Boer War' in James Curran, Anthony Smith and Pauline Wingate (eds.), *Impacts and Influences: Essays on Media Power in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1987), pp. 9-26.
[18] Camille Huysman Archive, Bruce Glasier to Serwry, October 1901, I 100/27. Cited in Christine Collette, 'The Second International and its Bureau, 1900-1905', Conference paper at Labour Movement Archives and Library conference, 'The International Labour Movement on the Threshold of Two Centuries' (24th-25th October 2002), p. 4.
[19] Hardie, *India: Impressions and Suggestions* (London, 1910), p. 107.
[20] Peter Van Duin, 'South Africa' in Marcel van der Linden and Jurgen Rojahn (eds.), *The Formation of Labour Movements 1870-1914: An International Perspective Volume II* (Leiden, 1990), p. 649.
[21] Ibid., p. 647.
[22] Hardie, *India,* pp. 98-100.
[23] James Ramsay MacDonald, *What I Saw in South Africa* (London, 1902); J.R. MacDonald, *The Awakening of India* (London, 1910).

in 1900; he resigned from the Fabian Society after its refusal to condemn the Boer War.[24] MacDonald was not alone in this; H.N. Brailsford joined the ILP in 1907 after concluding that the Fabians were not sufficiently critical of British imperialism.[25]

However, these activities could mask a more complex, often contradictory reality. As Paul Ward has shown, the ILP leadership often emphasised the British character of its socialism.[26] Furthermore, Ward has noted that the establishment of branches of trade unions such as the Amalgamated Society of Engineers in Canada, Australian and South Africa were 'less an expression of internationalism than of skilled workers' emigration to the dominions'.[27] Moreover, the labour movement was not immune to racist or xenophobic ideas. ILP parliamentary candidate Ben Tillett, who was centrally involved in the International Federation of Ship, Dock and River Workers and enthused about the prospect of taking worldwide industrial action, revealed just how superficial his commitment to the idea of 'universal brotherhood' was in practice. Commenting upon immigration into Britain he remarked, 'Yes, you are our brothers and we will do our duty by you, but we wish you had not come to this country'.[28] Indeed for Tillett, his perception of 'universalism' was severely limited as he believed there could be 'no comradeship' between black and white workers.[29] Therefore, rhetoric about 'worldwide' or universal equality was in reality, an expression of white solidarity.[30] Although such overt racism was not representative of the prevailing attitude within the ILP, Tillett's view on immigration was by no means marginal. Glasier argued that 'neither the principle of the brotherhood of man nor the principle of social equality implies that brother nations or brother men may crowd upon us in such numbers as to abuse our hospitality, overturn our institutions or violate our customs'.[31]

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[24] Vickers, *The Labour Party and the World*, p. 43.
[25] Jonathan Derrick, *Africa's Agitators: Militant Anti-Colonialism in Africa and the West: 1918-1939* (New York, 2008), p. 99.
[26] Paul Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack: Englishness, Patriotism and the British Left, 1881-1924* (London, 1998), p. 50.
[27] Ibid., p. 52.
[28] Quoted in Colin Nicolson, *Strangers to England: Immigration to England 1100-1952* (London, 1974), p. 101.
[29] Quoted in Stefan Berger, 'British and German Socialists Between Class and National Solidarity' in Stefan Berger and Angel Smith (eds.), *Nationalism, Labour and Ethnicity 1870-1939* (Manchester, 1999), p. 55.
[30] Logie Barrow, 'White Solidarity in 1914' in Raphael Samuel (ed.), *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity vol. 1* (London, 1989), p. 281.
[31] Ibid.

In the years prior to the war, several Liberals launched a vociferous attack on the conduct of imperial policy. Particularly significant was J. A. Hobson's 1902 work *Imperialism: A Study*, which was, in the words of one historian, 'the most widely read attack on the colonial movement'.[32] Published soon after the conclusion of the second Boer War, it denounced 'jingoism' and heavily influenced Lenin's 1917 study *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*. Yet unlike Lenin, critics such as Hobson were not anti-colonialists. As Mark Mazower has noted, 'what is striking is the degree to which even the most radical of British internationalists accepted the imperial framework of world politics'.[33] Here we might add that the mainstream nationalist movements in countries such as Ireland and India also accepted the imperialist system and did not advocate complete independence from the British Empire, but rather demanded dominion status within it. These Liberal critics had made their peace with the reality of empire, preferring instead to constructively critique the nature of colonial administration and offer a vision of what has variously been termed 'sane', 'constructivist' 'ethical' or 'benevolent' imperialism. According to Hobson, 'sane Imperialism' was 'devoted to the protection, development and education of a ''lower race'' whereas 'insane Imperialism' handed over 'these races to the economic exploitation of white colonists who will use them as ''live tools'' and their lands as repositories of mining or other profitable treasure'.[34]

The acceptance of empire also proved to be true for a significant section of the labour movement. For instance, Ramsay MacDonald's 1907 tract *Labour and the Empire*, despite criticising 'bombastic Imperialism' for being exploitative and 'incompatible with democracy', argued for the reform of empire rather than its dissolution.[35] MacDonald felt that the labour movement must adopt a realist attitude:

> Being historical it [Labour] does not quarrel with historical facts… it does not seek to go back on them when once they have passed beyond the stage of contemporary change. The Labour Party therefore no more thinks of discussing whether the Stuarts should be

[32] Theodore S. Hamerow, *The Birth of a New Europe: State and Society in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1983), p. 410.
[33]Mark Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace*: *The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations* (Oxford, 2008), p. 32.
[34] John Atkinson Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study* (London, 1902), p. 260.
[35] James Ramsay MacDonald, *Labour and the Empire* (London, 1907), p. 22. For further discussion of the ideas outlined in this work, see Austen Morgan, *J. Ramsay MacDonald* (Manchester, 1987), pp. 45-6.

> restored to the throne than it does of debating whether we should break the Empire into pieces.[36]

He called for the implementation of an 'Imperial standard' based on 'certain axioms regarding human liberty and the administration of justice'.[37] MacDonald envisioned Labour's form of imperialism as one which 'to its subject races… desires to occupy the position of friend… (and)… to its self-governing Imperial states… seeks to be an equal'.[38] Here MacDonald made an important distinction between those deemed capable of self-government and those considered to be incapable. Moreover, the criterion for self-rule was evidently based on race. However, it is important to note that MacDonald himself conceded that he was 'perhaps too bold in associating the Labour Party with this book. The Labour Party has as yet sanctioned no Imperial policy'.[39]

As MacDonald acknowledged, there was by no means a consensus on the issue. Some socialists wanted its immediate and total dissolution, some believed that imperial expansion was historically necessary if the capitalist epoch was to pass into socialism, while others contended that Europe required colonial possessions if its workers were to have economic prosperity. When the Second International met in Stuttgart in August 1907 the majority report of its colonial commission initially recommended that while the 'general usefulness or necessity of the colonies – particularly for the working class' was 'highly exaggerated', the congress did not 'in principle reject all colonial policy for all time, as it could have a civilising effect under a socialist regime'.[40] This was then revised to read: 'In view of the fact that socialism wants to develop the productive energies of the entire globe and to raise all peoples to the highest levels of culture the congress does not in principle reject every colonial policy, since such a policy can have a civilising effect under a socialist regime'.[41]

Despite these amendments, the motion was rejected by 127 votes to 108, with 10 abstentions. Tellingly however, the majority of the British delegation, which was

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[36] Ibid., p. 108.
[37] Ibid., p. 50.
[38] Ibid., p. 109.
[39] Ibid., xiv.
[40] *International Socialist Congress at Stuttgart August 18-24, 1907* (Berlin, 1907), p. 112.
[41] Cited in Karl Kautsky, 'Introduction' in *Socialism and Colonial Policy: An Analysis* (Berlin, 1907); Neil Redfern, *Class or Nation: Communists, Imperialism and the Two World Wars* (London, 2005), pp. 19-20.

comprised of 10 members of the Labour Party, 4 from the Social Democratic Federation, 4 from the ILP and 2 from the Fabian Society voted 14 to 6 in favour.[42] Yet, as Partha Sarthi Gupta has noted, in this vote, the ILP contingent 'joined the German leader Kautsky in opposing imperialism under any guise'.[43]

Therefore, as we have seen, the ILP's internationalism was wide-ranging, incorporating several distinct aspects. The first key feature was the internationalisation of socialist and trade union organisation. The second characteristic was opposition to imperialist and capitalist wars. A third facet involved engaging with national movements seeking independence from British rule and fourth was a dialogue on the future of the British Empire. However, internationalism, regardless of whether it came in its liberal or socialist guises was never inherently anti-colonialist in the sense that it demanded the immediate ending of empire.

The Challenges of World War, 1914-1918

After the formation of the Labour Party in 1906, the ILP initiated the majority of the discussion concerning foreign affairs, and the Labour Party as a whole proved very receptive to ILP-inspired resolutions on issues such as anti-militarism and the need to replace war with arbitration.[44] Yet, at the outbreak of war in 1914, the ILP distinguished itself as the only significant section of the British labour movement to actively oppose the conflict in Europe. The Fabians for instance, backed the war as a 'crusade for democracy'.[45] Indeed, as Julius Braunthal has highlighted, the ILP was the only mass workers' party in Europe to oppose the war.[46] In doing so, the ILP had, according to its London City branch, 'remained loyal to the principles of internationalism'.[47] The party remained hopeful that its vision of internationalism could be revived, as its National Administrative Council proclaimed:

> We are told that International Socialism is dead, that all our hopes and ideals are wrecked by the fire and pestilence and European war. It is not true. Out of the darkness and the

[42] For allocations of the votes see Harold Henry Fisher, *The Bolsheviks and the World War: The Origins of the Third International* (Stanford, 1960), p. 61.
[43] Partha Sarathi Gupta, *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement 1914-1964* (New York, 1975), p. 9.
[44] Henry Ralph Winkler, *British Labour Seeks a Foreign Policy, 1900-1940* (New Jersey, 2005), p. 4.
[45] Gerda Richards Crosby, *Disarmament and Peace in British Politics 1914-1919*, (1957), p. 21.
[46] Julius Braunthal, *History of the International 1914-1943* (London, 1967), p. 34.
[47] Quoted in Paul Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack: Englishness, Patriotism and the British Left, 1881-1924* (London, 1998), p. 126.

> depth we hail our working-class comrades of every land… Long live International Socialism! [48]

ILP members Fenner Brockway and Clifford Allen took the initiative to set up the 'No Conscription Fellowship' and thousands of its members were imprisoned for their opposition to the war, including high-profile cases like that of Alice Wheeldon.[49] Overall, of the 1,191 people tried as conscientious objectors, 805 were members of the ILP.[50] However, although an anti-war stance prevailed within the party, opinion was neither uniform nor static. Two of its seven MPs – James Parker and J.R. Clynes, its chairman Fred Jowett and eleven of its branches openly supported the war effort.[51] Joseph Burgess, one of the party's founders, former organising secretary, local councillor and NAC member had succeeded in securing anti-war and anti-imperialist resolutions at the first annual conference of the Labour Representative Committee in 1901. However, in 1915 he resigned over the issue of the war and joined Hyndman's pro-war National Socialist Party.[52] Others chose to remain and portray the party as a supporter of the war effort. In 1916, at a meeting in Newcastle upon Tyne, ILP activist Thomas Richardson claimed that the ILP were 'second to none in their admiration of their brave countrymen who had joined the colours in defence of civil and political liberty', asserting that 'tyrannical Kaiserism' was 'a menace not only to Europe but to the world'.[53] At the annual conference in 1917, a motion calling on ILP MPs to vote against any war credits in future was voted down by 198 votes to 61.[54] Furthermore, as the conflict progressed, Hardie and MacDonald became convinced that the war had to be fought until Germany was defeated.[55] The emergence of the ILP leaders' more pessimistic attitude and the existence of a pro-war contingent at a grassroots level were overlooked in Braunthal's analysis.

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[48] Quoted in G.D.H. Cole, *Labour in War Time* (London, 1915), p. 33.
[49] For details of Wheeldon's case see Shelia Rowbotham, *A Century of the History of Women in Britain and the United States* (New York, 1997), pp. 65-67.
[50] Robert Dowse, *Left in the Centre: The Independent Labour Party, 1893-1940* (London, 1966), p. 27.
[51] Jowett, although a member of the UDC was 'inclined to oppose war but likewise inclined to support this one' as he was convinced that Britain 'needed to fight this war to win'. See Brock Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain* (London, 2000), p. 12. Jowett has been described as 'pro-war.' See John T. Callaghan, *The Labour Party and Foreign Policy: A History* (Oxford, 2007), p. 27.
[52] David Mayall, 'Joseph Burgess' in A.T. Lane, *Biographical Dictionary of European Labour Leaders: Volume 2* (Connecticut, 1995), p. 164.
[53] *Blaydon Courier*, 23 September 1916.
[54] Francis Ludwig Carsten, *War Against War: British and German Radical Movements in the First World War* (London, 1982), p. 167.
[55] Ibid.

A major war-time development which was to have considerable implications for immediate post-war policy was the establishment in 1914 of the anti-militarist pressure group the Union of Democratic Control (UDC), which had attracted over 300,000 members by the autumn of 1915.[56] The organisation's manifesto advocated five main tenets, the first of which set out a commitment to self-determination, stating that 'No Province shall be transferred from one Government to another without the consent by plebiscite or otherwise of the population of such Province'.[57] The second called for an end to 'secret diplomacy', stipulating that: 'No Treaty, Arrangement, or Undertaking shall be entered upon in the name of Great Britain without the sanction of Parliament. Adequate machinery for ensuring democratic control of foreign policy shall be created'.[58]

In addition, it argued that states should no longer form alliances but co-operate in an 'International Council'. Furthermore, states should aim to drastically reduce and control armaments and enter into an 'Open Door' trade agreement to ensure an end to 'economic war'.[59] The UDC featured senior ILP members such as MacDonald, Phillip Snowden, Jowett and H.N. Brailsford along with politicians and activists who, at that point, were close to the Liberal Party, including E.D. Morel, J. A. Hobson, Charles Trevelyan. It was very much a cross-class initiative as this Liberal contingent was described by Fenner Brockway as 'bourgeois to their fingertips'.[60] As indicated by Jowett's involvement, the organisation was not explicitly 'pacifist' (although described as such by the government), rather it was a vociferous critic of Britain's war time policies at home and abroad.[61] Indeed, as Rhiannon Vickers has pointed out, the UDC's first pamphlet stated clearly that 'it is imperative that the war, once begun, should be prosecuted to a victory for our country'.[62] As a result, Arthur Henderson saw 'no inconsistency' in supporting Britain's war effort and being on the General Council of the UDC.[63] As Martin Ceadel has highlighted, there is an important difference between 'pacifism', that is to say, 'the belief that war is always wrong and should not be resorted to, whatever the consequences' and

[56] Marvin Swartz, *The Union of Democratic Control in British Politics During the First World War* (London, 1971), p. 61.
[57] *The Morrow of the War*, UDC pamphlet, no. 1 (London, 1914), pp. 1-2.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Brockway, *Inside the Left*, p. 18.
[61] According to Callaghan, the belief that Germany had to be defeated was shared by the majority of UDC members, see Callaghan, *The Labour Party and Foreign Policy*, p. 27.
[62] Quoted in Vickers, *The Labour Party and the World*, p. 61.
[63] F. M. Leventhal, *Arthur Henderson* (Manchester, 1989), p. 51.

'pacificism' i.e. 'the assumption that war although sometimes necessary is always an irrational and inhumane way to solve disputes, and that its prevention should always be an overriding political priority'.[64] Reactions to the UDC demonstrated the scope of opinion within the labour movement regarding the war. Thus, for Ellen Wilkinson, the timidity of the UDC was a 'tragedy' and called for the ILP to advocate a 'bold policy'.[65] While in Stirling, the miners' union withdrew from the town's trades council between 1915 and 1918 in order to protest against the decision to invite a member of the UDC to address the council.[66] Ultimately, the UDC directly influenced ILP policy and at its 1915 conference, the ILP passed a resolution which 'followed closely' the main aims of the UDC programme.[67]

Reconstructing and Constructing Internationalism in the Post-War World, 1918-1926

It was during the later stages of the war that the Labour Party began to formulate a more specific foreign policy, culminating in its 'war aims' statement of 1917, which was then accepted with only minor modifications by the conference of Inter-Allied Labour and Socialist parties in February 1918.[68] These aims included detailed proposals for the establishment of the League of Nations, the nature of future economic relations between states and opined on disputed territories such as the Balkans, Alsace and Lorraine, and Palestine.

It was the more pragmatic line on empire that was articulated in the war aims. On 'the colonial policy of capitalist governments' it declared that 'without ceasing to condemn it, the Inter-Allied Conference nevertheless recognises the existence of a state of things which it is obliged to take into account'.[69] Therefore, rather than dismantling empire, European labour called for the League of Nations to safeguard 'natives' against 'the

[64] Martin Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain 1914-1945: The Defining of a Faith* (London, 1980), p. 3.
[65] Carsten, *War Against War*, p. 54.
[66] I. G. C. Hutchinson, 'Scottish Issues in British Politics' in Chris Wrigley (ed.), *Companion to Early Twentieth Century Britain* (London, 2003), p. 79.
[67] Gerda Richards Crosby, *Disarmament and Peace in British Politics 1914-1919* (Cambridge, MA, 1957), p. 18.
[68] For background on the formulation of the war aims memorandum and the Inter-Allied Socialist Conference, see Imlay, *The Practice of Socialist Internationalism*, pp. 34-47.
[69] Inter-Allied Labour and Socialist Conference, *Memorandum on War Aim Agreed Upon at the Central Hall Westminster, London on February 20th to 24th 1918* (London, 1918), p. 12.

excesses of capitalist colonialism'.[70] It was at the insistence of the ILP that the additional clause was added which called for League of Nations involvement in this process and took into account the aspirations of the population within a particular territory, and read thus:

> With respect to these colonies the Conference declares in favour of a system of control, established by international agreement, under the League of Nations and maintained by its guarantee, which, whilst respecting national sovereignty, would be alike inspired by broad conceptions of economic freedom and concerned to safeguard the rights of the natives under the best conditions possible for them, and in particular:
> (1) It would take account in each locality of the wishes of the people, expressed in the form which is possible for them.
> (2) The interests of the native tribes as regards the ownership of the soil would be maintained.
> (3) The whole of the revenues would be devoted to the well-being and development of the colonies themselves.[71]

Therefore, while the document spoke of Labour's commitment to 'the frank abandonment of every form of imperialism', this did not mean decolonisation but rather the internationalisation of the imperial system.

German social democrats criticised the war aims policy as 'a masterpiece of English cant', which would 'further the aims of Entente Imperialism' and approvingly quoted Joseph Havelock Wilson's assessment that it was 'the most contradictory document that was ever laid before a Labour Congress'.[72] The German socialists pointed out that despite the supposed commitment to self-determination, Ireland had not been deemed worthy of independence.[73] The ILP too were deeply critical of aspects of the memorandum. They urged the congress to remove the section which assigned 'responsibility for the origins of the war' to Germany describing it as 'eminently undesirable' as the assembly could 'in no sense be regarded as a judicial or impartial body'.[74]

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[70] Ibid., p. 13
[71] Ibid., p. 13.
[72] *Die Neue Zeit*, 11 January, 1918. People's History Museum, Manchester, Labour Party Archive (LPA), LSI 1/3; *Die Neue Zeit*, July 1918, PHM, LPA, LSI 1/14 i. (English Translation).
[73] Ibid.
[74] 'Note by the Independent Labour Party on the Memorandum on War Issued by the Executive Committee of the Labour Party'. LSE, ILP 5/18/22.

One of the most significant outcomes of the war was the demise of the Second International. The affiliated parties had resolved to actively oppose war, but when Britain declared war on Germany in August 1914, such action failed to materialise and the anti-war contingent of the working-class movement was increasingly isolated.[75] A month prior to the end of hostilities, the ILP expressed their belief in 'the need for the reconstitution of the Socialist International' urging the French Socialist Party to call the International.[76] However, from 1918 to 1921 it chose to 'stand aloof' from the two major Internationals – the Comintern having being established in 1920.[77] Yet, this was not due to a lack of enthusiasm for an international socialist organisation, but was because the ILP believed that remaining 'independent' would place the party in a position to unify the socialist movement. Indeed, the sense of priority was indicated in an ILP policy document from 1920 discussing strategy with regards to the Internationals which stated, 'No more momentous decision has ever been asked for from the ILP'.[78] In 1921 the party unilaterally involved itself in the Vienna or 'Second and a Half' International which unsuccessfully attempted to bridge the divide between revolutionary and reformist socialists, before eventually affiliating to the Labour and Socialist International (LSI) in 1924.[79]

A definitive episode of this period was Labour's response to the Russian revolution of 1917. Even though Labour, including the ILP, had 'little sympathy' for the Bolshevik government, actually inviting Kerensky to their 1918 annual conference, it was unequivocal in its defence of the Soviet Union.[80] In fact, by 1920, the Labour Party, along with the TUC was 'unanimously determined' to call a general strike to prevent Britain declaring war on Russia. A.J.P. Taylor has argued that opposition to intervention was motivated 'more from dislike of further war than from any love of the Bolsheviks'.[81] However, it is important to take into account that many figures from across the spectrum of the labour movement explicitly justified actions in terms of international socialism

[75] James Joll, *The Second International 1889-1914* (Oxford, 1974), p. 183.
[76] Minutes of the Meeting of the National Administrative Council of the Independent Labour Party, 10-11 October 1918, p. 5.
[77] *The Independent Labour Party and the International: A Memorandum to Members*. LSE, ILP 5/1920/13.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Winkler, *Labour Seeks a Foreign Policy*, p. 38.
[80] Braunthal, *History of the International*, p. 110.
[81] A. J. P. Taylor, *The Trouble Makers Dissent Over Foreign Policy: 1792-1939* (London, 1964), p. 162.

rather than anti-militarism. Herbert Morrison maintained that 'a war against Russia was not alone a war against Bolshevism or Lenin, but against the whole international organisation of socialism'.[82] Similarly, the ILP's John Paton commented, 'For me as for most socialists, the fate of world socialism was bound up with the success or failure of the Russian Revolution'.[83] For George Orwell, who was of the opinion that in Britain patriotism was 'usually stronger than class-hatred and always stronger than any kind of internationalism', the 'Hands Off Russia' campaign represented the only instance in which the British working class had ever 'thought or acted internationally'.[84]

After the war, the Union of Democratic Control greatly impacted upon the composition of the ILP. Leading members of the UDC such as Morel, Trevelyan and Angell all joined the ILP within a few years of the war ending. They were joined in the ILP by ex-Liberal MPs who had not been involved with the UDC such as Josiah Wedgwood and Noel Buxton. The decision to join the ILP is even more significant given that in 1918, it was for the first time possible to attain individual membership of the Labour Party without being a member of an affiliated trade union or socialist group. By the 1920s, the leadership of the UDC consisted entirely of ILPers.[85] It is hardly surprising therefore, given the influx of ex-Liberals joining existing members like MacDonald who as we saw, advanced broadly similar conceptions to Hobson regarding empire, that this doctrine of 'sane imperialism' became prominent within the interwar ILP.[86]

In the immediate post-war period, MacDonald reiterated his arguments in relation to the empire. He maintained that socialists should strive to create an empire comprised of self-governing states and could not 'refuse responsibility for the… native races'.[87] Speaking in 1921, John Scurr articulated the tension between ideology and practice, arguing that if

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[82] Labour Party, *Annual Report* (London, 1919), p. 118.
[83] Quoted in Dowse, *Left in the Centre*, p. 52.
[84] George Orwell, *The Lion and the Unicorn: Socialism and the English Genius* (London, 1982), p. 48. Stephen White, *Britain and the Bolshevik Revolution* (London, 1979). This study argued that the Hands Off Russia movement was anti-war rather than pro-Bolshevik. For other studies see M. H. Cowden, *Russian Bolshevism and British Labor: 1917-21* (New York, 1984); Kevin Morgan, *Bolshevism and the British Left: Labour Legends and Russian Gold* (London, 2006).
[85] David Blazaar, *The Popular Front and the Progressive Tradition: Socialists, Liberals and the Quest for Unity* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 120.
[86] The influence of Hobson on MacDonald's writings has been noted. See Gregory Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics: British Critics of Empire, 1850-1920* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 201; For Liberal attitudes to imperialism after the Boer War, see Bernard Potter, *Critics of Empire: British Radicals and the Imperial Challenge* (London, 1968), p. 294.
[87] Ramsay MacDonald, *Socialism: Constructive and Critical* (London, 1921), pp. 251-252.

Labour were to come into government: 'We might be opposed to Imperialism, *but we must admit the Empire was a concrete fact,* whose existence carried with it duties and responsibilities that Labour would be cowardly to ignore'.[88]

There were, however, dissenting voices. Maintaining that 'Indian freedom can only be won by Indian people themselves', in 1921 Fenner Brockway questioned the notion that British labourites could automatically assume the role of educators in the colonies, arguing: 'the first duty of an Englishman in regard to India is to educate, not the Indian people, but his own countrymen to a knowledge of the tyranny of British Rule… until we do that we should be ashamed to go to India as guides or teachers'.[89] Nonetheless, paternalistic attitudes were deeply ingrained. Even Norman Leys, who was a vocal opponent of imperialism, still only had qualified support for Indian self-rule. As Nicholas Owen has pointed out, Leys feared that the Indians might not be able to formulate a constitution and argued that the ILP should be given the task of devising it, given their experience in this area.[90]

Despite the significant migration of Liberals into the party, ILPers did not accept that Labour had simply adopted the foreign policy of the Liberals. Responding to a claim in the *New Statesman* that 'on all questions of foreign affairs' there was 'no serious division of opinion between the Liberal and the Labour Parties', Brailsford pointed out that Labour was opposed to Lord Grey's advocacy of a military alliance with France and attacked Lloyd George for conspiring with Clemenceau to create 'a peace of violence and dictation' which had rendered the League of Nations 'nothing but a pathetic monument to the war-time illusions of Liberalism'.[91] In the post-war period, the ILP continued to devote a great deal of attention to international developments. The party's paper *The New Leader,* under the editorship of Brailsford, extensively featured foreign policy in its pages, much of it penned by Brailsford himself. A key element of Brailsford's political thought related to the economic benefit of international co-operation. He argued that because the world market was one entity, it followed that poverty elsewhere in the world

[88] Quoted in R. Palme Dutt, 'The British Empire', *Labour Monthly,* Vol. 5. No. 4, October 1923.
[89] Fenner Brockway, *Non-Co-operation in Other Lands* (London, 1921), p. i. LSE Archive, ILP Pamphlets, ILP/5/1921/6.
[90] Nicholas J. Owen, *The British Left and India: Metropolitan Anti-Imperialism: 1885-1947* (London, 2007), p. 151.
[91] H.N. Brailsford, 'The International Scene', *New Leader,* 27 October 1922.

adversely affected employment for British workers by creating the 'universal evil' of under-consumption.[92] Therefore, it was 'the duty of International Socialists' from Britain and the 'Western International' to provide help 'as educators and organisers' to workers 'in the Empire and far beyond it' in their 'industrial and political struggle for the better distribution of income'.[93] One means of achieving this was to 'capture' the League of International Labour Office, and turn it into a power that would 'raise the conditions of exploited populations'.[94] It was also imperative if under-consumption was to be tackled to 'advance to a working League of Nations' which would 'internationalise' resources such as raw materials by rationing them.[95]

Much of the ILP's criticism was levelled at the League of Nations', despite, (or perhaps because of) its relentless advocacy of such an organisation. The suitability of the League to secure lasting world peace was called into question. Robert Smillie told an ILP meeting in Newcastle that 'it was not to the League of Nations… but to movements like the I.L.P… that we must look to end war'.[96] However, the prevailing policy within the ILP still held that the League of Nations, including its mandates system was sound in principle and needed reform of the kind outlined by Brailsford.

Anti-Colonialism and the League Against Imperialism: 1927-1932

The turning point arrived in 1926 when James Maxton replaced MacDonald's ally Clifford Allen as ILP chairman, a development which signalled the ascendancy of the left wing into the party's leadership and had profound implications for the direction of its internationalism. At the time of Maxton's election, the ILP was undoubtedly ideologically anti-imperialist. Take, for example, the ILP pamphlet *The Crime of Empire* by C.A Smith which considered the nature of imperial rule in non-self-governing parts of the empire: 'Empire is *not* glorious – it is essentially robbery with violence motivated by greed and maintained by murder'.[97]

[92] Brailsford, 'The Case For Internationalism', *New Leader,* 30 March, 1923.
[93] Brailsford, 'Too Much Foreign Policy?', *New Leader,* 16 March 1923.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid.
[96] 'The ILP at Work', *New Leader,* 16 March 1923.
[97] C. A. Smith, *The Crime of Empire* (London, 1925), p. 15. LSE, ILP 5 /1925/56.

Nevertheless, as Stephen Howe has pointed out, the ILP's official colonial policy still was one of 'overt paternalism'.[98] The document *Socialism and the Empire,* which Smith saw as 'the constructive policy of the ILP', had been drawn up by the ILP Empire Policy Committee in March 1926.[99] Quoting from the ILP's constitution, the report emphasised that socialists must recognise that 'the interests of the workers throughout the world whatever race, colour or creed are one, and that war and imperialism are mainly caused by the greed of competing capitalist groups'.[100] Therefore 'the policy which Socialism would adopt in relation to Empire problems' involved 'a complete break with many past traditions'.[101] However, one tradition it did not break from was an acceptance of the mainstream race-based distinction between those parts of the empire that were capable of self-government and those that were incapable: 'it must be recognised that, for many races self-government is an ideal which could not be realised for some years'.[102] In the meantime, these would be governed as mandates, as although the system 'was open to criticism in some respects' it was, 'in the main… based on the right principles'.[103] Furthermore, the report completely rejected any process of decolonisation, even for those deemed capable of self-rule. Instead, it declared that '… the Socialist aim should not be a destructive one of breaking up the Empire, but a constructive one seeking to develop it into a real Commonwealth of Nations'.[104] Therefore, in fundamental respects, the official policy still contained within it many of Hobson's central ideas and in fact, Hobson was approvingly quoted in C. A. Smith's work.[105]

However, in February 1927, leading figures in the ILP became key founder members of a transnational anti-colonial organisation, the League Against Imperialism (LAI), which had been initiated by Communist Party organiser and KPD member of the Reichstag, Willi Münzenberg.[106] The aim was to bring together intellectuals, communist and social

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[98] Stephen Howe, *Anti-Colonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire 1918-1964* (Oxford, 1993), p. 70.
[99] Smith, *The Crime of Empire*, p. 2.
[100] *Socialism and The Empire: Report of the ILP Empire Policy Committee Submitted to the Annual Conference of the Party, 1926* (London, 1926), p. 3.
[101] Ibid. p. 3.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid., p. 18.
[104] Ibid., p. 4.
[105] Smith, *The Crime of Empire*, p. 2.
[106] For detailed discussions of Müzenberg's political career see Helmut Gruber, 'Willi Münzenberg's German Communist Propaganda Empire 1921-*1933', The Journal of Modern History* 38, (1966), pp. 278-297; Gruber, 'Willi Münzenberg: Propagandist for and against the Comintern', *International Review of Social History* 10 (1965), pp. 188-210.

democratic working-class parties and anti-colonial nationalist movements to work for the defeat of imperialism. In December of 1926, the 'Provisional Committee of International Congress Against Imperialism and Oppression', which included figures like Münzenberg, Lansbury and Nehru, had issued an invitation to create 'a permanent organisation to link up all forces combating international imperialism and in order to ensure their effective support for the fight for emancipation'.[107] This resulted in the Brussels conference which, in the words of one scholar, 'hosted a stunning array of delegates', including Albert Einstein, Henri Barbusse, Upton Sinclair and Nehru.[108]

The decision to accept the invitation to participate in the LAI represented a significant departure from previous policy. In this respect, the League's full title was ideologically revealing, namely, 'The League Against Imperialism and For National Independence'. As we have seen with the case of the ILP's *Socialism and the Empire,* many socialists who were resolutely against imperialism were not necessarily in favour of national independence, particularly for those 'races' considered as yet unfit for self-rule. After the founding conference, the Communist Party's Harry Pollitt made reference to this section of the labour movement, remarking that the LAI was 'the answer to the armchair theorists who dilate upon imperialism and the empire as something that only needs the humanitarian touch in order that it can be put right'.[109] Pollitt approvingly quoted Georg Ledebour had who told the congress, ''There can be no socialist colonial policy'' as 'the very term connotes exploitation on an unparalleled scale'.[110] Twenty years earlier, Ledebour, along with Kautsky had led the opposition to the idea of a 'socialist' colonial policy at the Second International congress in 1907.[111]

The LAI's founding conference had a profound impact upon many of those involved. Lansbury, who was unanimously elected chairman, compared the gathering to the signing of the American Declaration of Independence and 'visualised the days a hundred years hence when men will look back to the great gathering… at Brussels… and they will tell

[107] 'Invitation to the International Congress Against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism.' Berlin 1926. League Against Imperialism Archives 1926-1931, International Institute of Social History Amsterdam, General: Congresses and Conferences, 1. Invitation, with Agenda.
[108] David Luis-Brown, *Waves of Decolonisation: Discourses of Race and Hemispheric Citizenship in Cuba, Mexico and the United States* (Durham, N.C, 2008), p. 118.
[109] *Sunday Worker*, 20 February 1927.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Talbot Imlay, *The Practice of Socialist Internationalism, European Socialists and International Politics, 1914 - 1960* (Oxford, 2018), p. 205.

once again that men and women gathered together, once more to declare that all men and women are born equal'.[112] Lansbury explained the rationale behind supporting nationalist movements in the following terms: 'the more we can get the spirit of Nationalism developed and expressed in the grander and wider ideal of International Socialism, the sooner will the world be freed from the curse of militarism and its accompaniments of piracy, plunder and murder'.[113] In essence, freedom from imperialism was a prerequisite for genuine internationalism. Therefore, all the various groups at the congress expressing 'one point of view', namely that 'the peoples of the world must be free from the thraldom of Capitalist Imperialism in order that they may by their own action become partners together in the great task of building… the International Commonwealth of All Peoples'.[114] Lansbury directly challenged the prevailing attitude within the labour movement, noting that: 'even among Socialists… we hear various statements intended to prove that white men organise and control coloured people for the good of those controlled'. By contrast, those gathered at the conference 'without reservation' rejected 'that whole doctrine' and would endeavour to 'convert' the 'citizens of Imperialist countries' to this viewpoint.[115] He also rejected as 'absolutely untrue' the idea that the movement was directed from Moscow.

In similarly enthusiastic tones, Ellen Wilkinson described it as 'the most dramatic conference I was ever at', noting that 'there isn't space to describe all the interesting people who were present'.[116] Again, she dismissed claims of control by Moscow, stating that 'the said League is *not* some Machiavellian plot of the wicked Red Russians against the British Empire'. She denied that the Soviet Union was financing and controlling the LAI and pointed to the fact that there were no Russian delegates present. Wilkinson believed that there was a common interest in ending imperialism, as while 'white workers had been content to see brown and yellow and black men butchered and enslaved' they now were suffering economically from the results of 'competition of the ill-paid labour of the East'.[117]

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[112] 'Report on the Development of the League Against Imperialism', *Anti-Imperialist Review*, July 1928, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 84; George Lansbury, 'A Great Week-end', *Lansbury's Labour Weekly,* 19 February 1927.
[113] Lansbury, Ibid.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ellen Wilkinson, 'Painted Saints', *Lansbury's Labour Weekly*, 19 February 1927.
[117] Ibid. For Wilkinson's involvement with the LAI see Matt Perry, '*Red Ellen' Wilkinson Her Ideas Movements and World* (Manchester, 2014), pp. 161-165.

Brockway described the conference as 'without exception the most remarkable and significant international gathering' he had ever attended.[118] It was 'something approaching a Parliament of Mankind' which 'may easily prove to be one of the most significant movements for equality and freedom in world history'.[119] During his speech to the congress, Brockway evoked Keir Hardie, saying of the ILP that 'the spirit of Keir Hardie is our spirit'.[120] He criticised the last Labour government's policy towards India, and assured the audience that the ILP 'then opposed and still opposes that policy'. Furthermore, he pledged that 'if hostilities ensue between England and China, our sympathies will be with the latter'.[121] In a dramatic scene, Brockway then shook hands with a Chinese delegate and 'the whole audience… rose and roared its applause'.[122]

Rhetoric aside, for Brockway, there were important political reasons why the ILP should involve itself in the LAI. Firstly, the LAI had the potential to help fulfil a central ILP ambition, namely to aid in the process of unifying the international labour movement.[123] Brockway was very explicit about this point, 'The I.L.P. is seeking to reunite the International Socialist Movement, The League Against Imperialism may be an important bridge across the existing gulf'.[124] Secondly, although he denied it was Moscow-controlled, Brockway argued it would be 'suicidal' for socialists not to involve itself in the LAI, even if it had been initiated by communists, because it had 'done what the Socialist International has failed to do – seriously begun the task of uniting the proletarian movements among the coloured races'.[125] Thus Brockway argued that the 'great significance' of the LAI lay in 'bringing the Socialists of Europe in contact with the nationalist movements and influencing them towards socialism and internationalism'.[126]

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[118] 'Nationalism is Not Enough', *Sunday Worker*, 20 February 1927.
[119] Fenner Brockway, 'The Coloured Peoples International', *New Leader*, 26 August 1927.
[120] Bakar Ali Mizra, 'The Congress Against Imperialism', *Modern Review*, May 1927.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Brockway, *Inside the Left*, p. 168. Clearly the LAI had a last impression on Brockway as he referred to it in several his autobiographical accounts, including his final memoir published almost sixty years after the Brussels conference, see Brockway, *98 Not Out* (London, 1986), p. 50.
[123] At the ILP's annual conference Maxton had argued for the unity of the LSI and Third International, see Knox, *Maxton*, p. 72. The ILP submitted a resolution to the LSI executive calling for the unification of the Internationals, see Brockway, *Inside the Left*, p. 165 and ILP, *Annual Report* 1927, p. 49.
[124] Brockway, 'The Coloured Peoples International', *New Leader*, 26 August 1927.
[125] Ibid.
[126] 'Nationalism is Not Enough', *Sunday Worker*, 20 February 1927. Brockway noted that another value of the conference was that for nationalists the conference 'served the useful purpose... of warning them against allowing nationalism to degenerate into imperialism', see ILP, *Annual Report*, 1927, p. 10.

At this point, however, it is not clear that Brockway subscribed to an absolutist anti-colonial perspective. The ILP's resolution to the LSI conference of 1928, while demanding self-determination for Egypt and India, also noted that the League of Nations should have a role where it was 'not immediately practicable to extend full self-government to a subject race'.[127]

The decision to throw its energies into the LAI was met with severe criticism from both the LSI and the Labour Party, which were convinced that the LAI was a communist front.[128] The mainstream social democratic movement believed that the true objectives of the LAI were to undermine the LSI and spread communist propaganda in the colonies.[129] Undeterred, the ILP continued with its LAI activities and Lansbury chaired the first meeting of the International Executive Committee in late March.[130] In Britain, in April 1927, a meeting was held at the House of Commons which provisionally established a British section of the LAI. Brockway took the chair, with Lansbury as treasurer and ILPer Reginald Bridgeman as secretary.[131] The meeting agreed to draft a reply to the LSI in which Brockway reiterated the reasons why the ILP had become involved and enquired whether under the LSI's constitution, the ILP could affiliate.[132]

It is not surprising that Labour attempted to distance itself from the LAI, given the political capital it afforded to their opponents. The Tories immediately seized on the Labour left's involvement in the LAI, as in March 1927, during a parliamentary debate on the deployment of British troops to China, Conservative MP Major Kindersley drew attention to the LAI's policy on China. After noting the involvement of MPs such as Maxton, Lansbury and Wilkinson he quoted extensively from the League's position on China, recently adopted at the Brussels congress, before concluding:

> The general tone of the Conference is this: It is an organisation which exists apparently to stir up the native races against existing forms of government, and I can imagine no more

[127] ILP, *Annual Report* (London, 1929), p. 47. Brockway was chairman of the ILP delegation which tabled several resolutions to the LSI congress, see idem, p. 14.
[128] Andrew Williams, *Labour and Russia: The Attitude of the Labour Party to the USSR, 1924-1934* (Manchester, 1989), p. 84.
[129] Kate O' Malley, 'The League Against Imperialism: British Irish and Indian Connections', *Communist History Network Newsletter* 14 (2003), p. 21, note 9.
[130] 'Report', *Anti-Imperialist Review*, 1928, p. 83.
[131] 'League Against Imperialism', *New Leader*, 15 April 1927.
[132] Jones, 'League Against Imperialism', p. 17.

> shameful or diabolical work than that which is apparently undertaken by this organisation. I wish to ask how Members of this House reconcile their membership of such an organisation with the oath that they take at the Table of this House.[133]

Moreover, it left Labour open to the accusation that its foreign policy was being manipulated by Communists and worse; that some Labour members were actively and knowingly engaging in a Communist 'conspiracy' – a charge which had apparently proved damaging at the general election of 1924. While Kindersley had questioned the ILP's loyalties by enquiring how membership of the LAI and the British parliament were compatible with each other, Anthony Eden was more explicit, declaring in the same debate that Labour's new slogan should read 'Support Socialism and betray Englishmen'.[134]

In the face of increasing pressure from Labour and the LSI, and fearing that it might affect his chances of becoming Labour Party chair, Lansbury resigned as chairman of the LAI in June 1927.[135] Commenting on Lansbury's departure, LAI literature declared 'Had the Labour Party been truly socialist, this incompatibility would not have existed'.[136] Lansbury was replaced by Brockway, who chaired the second meeting of the international Executive Committee in August, but the situation became more problematic for the ILP when in early September 1927, the Executive Committee of the LSI passed a resolution which stipulated that neither the LSI nor any of its affiliated parties should associate with the LAI.[137] Consequently, Labour banned party members from LAI activities and in government, even went so far as to ban the LAI from meeting in London.[138] In these circumstances, LAI literature praised Maxton and Brockway for having 'stood by the League personally'.[139]

Furthermore, it was not only Labour and the LSI which objected to the LAI. The decision to participate in the LAI caused serious divisions within the ILP. When its NAC met in

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[133] House of Commons Debates, 8 March 1927, vol. 203, cols. 1124-1126.
[134] Ibid.
[135] 'Report', *Anti-Imperialist Review*, 1928, p. 84; Imlay, *The Practice of Socialist Internationalism*, p. 233.
[136] 'Report', *Ibid.*, 1928, p. 84.
[137] Imlay, *The Practice of Socialist Internationalism*, p. 232.
[138] Susan Dabney Pennybacker, *From Scottsboro to Munich: Race and Political Culture in 1930s Britain* (Princeton, 2009), p. 275.
[139] 'Report on the Development of the League Against Imperialism', *The Anti-Imperialist Review*, July 1928, Volume 1, No. 1, p. 85.

October 1927, there was an 'animated discussion' during which Shinwell, Kirkwood and others expressed serious misgivings about the LAI. According to the *New Leader*, during the course of the debate, Kirkwood 'thundered' at Maxton that 'the chairman of the I.L.P. would have to do what he was told'.[140] On the other side, Frank Wise, Oswald Mosley, and Dorothy Jewson held a positive view of the organisation.[141] Nevertheless, a general consensus was reached which decided against affiliation. Brockway presented a report in which he declared that after investigating the LSI's claims, he had concluded that the LAI was not communist-controlled. However, he believed that given the LSI's recent ruling, ILP affiliation would be 'unwise' and offered his resignation as chairman of the LAI so that he could retain his position on the LSI executive, which was accepted. A further debate ensued during which, it was decided by a majority of 7-3 that individuals were permitted to maintain contact in an individual capacity.[142]

After Brockway's resignation, Maxton assumed the chairmanship of both the British section and the presidency of the international LAI. Maxton had been a critic of the first Labour government's colonial policy; however, his solution was the conventional 'Empire Socialism' view.[143] Nonetheless, he backed the LAI from its inception.[144] By the time he accepted the chairmanship of the LAI, Maxton had adopted an anti-colonialist position which was underpinned by a number of concerns. First, he emphasised that as appalling as life was for workers in developed capitalist countries it was 'infinitely worse' for the subject peoples, 'particularly the coloured races', who were exposed to the 'double tyranny of 'foreign government and foreign capitalism'.[145] He dismissed the idea that imperial rule could benefit native populations, citing the high mortality rates and low wages in India as proof of this. However, workers in imperialist countries also had a material interest in dismantling imperialism. First of all, he argued that the imperial system not only exploited workers in native countries, but simultaneously used this 'as an agency in beating down the standards of life of workers in the ruling country'. Secondly, Maxton highlighted the vast public expenditure that was spent upon maintaining an

[140] 'ILP National Council', *New Leader*, 7 October 1927.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid.
[143] 'Empire Socialism', was a school of thought espoused by fellow Clydesiders such as Wheatley and Johnston. See Maxton's speech in parliament, H.C Deb, 2 March 1926, vol. 192, cols. 1323-1325.
[144] Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the League Against Imperialism, Brussels, 28th April 1928', p. 4. Maxton Papers, Giffnock.
[145] James Maxton, 'Foreword', *The Anti-Imperialist Review*, July 1928, Volume 1, No. 1, p. 1.

empire. He claimed that the cost of the British military totalled 'over one hundred million pounds' and 'a large proportion' of this was spent 'policing various parts of the British Empire'. Consequently, while India had proved a 'rich field of exploitation' for British capitalists, it had been 'merely a burden to the British people'. Therefore, it followed that the 'economic destinies' of workers in imperialist and subject countries were 'completely bound up' with one another.[146]

At his first meeting of the international executive, Maxton explained that he 'believed in the League' as it carried out 'a bit of work that the Labour organisations do not'. He described the LAI as 'a very hopeful movement' and commented that 'the fact that it is called Communist does not disturb me'.[147] Clearly aware of Labour's opposition to ILP involvement in the organisation, Maxton was nonetheless confident that he would not face exclusion, remarking that, 'my position makes me a difficult man for the Labour Party'. Nevertheless, it was a decision which demonstrated a definite commitment to the LAI. For Maxton, it was 'a matter of personal freedom and conscience.'[148] Therefore, he was in his own words, 'prepared to stand against the Labour Party' provided that the League did not 'act against the principles of the Labour movement'.[149]

As it transpired, the ILP's LAI activities did indeed prove to be a source of conflict. In November 1928, the Labour Party NEC wrote to the ILP's NAC claiming that at a meeting in Limehouse 'under the auspices of the League Against Imperialism' Maxton had launched a verbal attack on Clement Attlee who, the previous year, had been appointed as one of the seven members of the cross-party Simon Commission, established to examine the prospects of constitutional reform in India.[150] Maxton completely rejected the NEC's accusations. He insisted that neither he nor any of the other speakers had criticised Attlee and that his speech at the meeting was 'a plea for support to secure a Labour Government, but to see to it that such a Government should grant self-government to India, despite any contrary recommendations of the Simon Commission'.[151] However,

[146] Ibid.
[147] Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Committee of the LAI, 1928', p. 4. Maxton Papers, Giffnock.
[148] Ibid, p. 5.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Minutes of the National Administrative Council of the Independent Labour Party, November 24th-25th 1928, p. 4.
[151] Ibid.

he assured the ILP's NAC that he would 'exercise extreme care to avoid finding himself in a similar position in future'.[152]

Another leading member of the LAI's British section was miners' leader A. J. Cook. Cook's political sympathies were complex. He joined the ILP in 1906 but left the Labour Party in 1913. He was then a founder member of the CPGB in 1920 before leaving in 1921.[153] Cook was however closely aligned politically the ILP left, and Maxton in particular. Cook entertained great ambitions for the LAI as he believed that 'international cooperation of all workers' could be achieved by the LAI.[154] In order for this to happen he argued that 'the revolutionary workers must conquer the Trade Unions' and set up a 'Universal Trade Union International' which would be allied to the LAI.[155] Therefore, at least for Cook, the LAI would not only rival the League of Nations but also be part of a process which would challenge the hegemony of the established institutions of the reformist international trade union movement, namely the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU). Others however, such as Gossip were sceptical about the feasibility of this proposal.[156]

Under Maxton's leadership, the British section resolved to 'proceed to secure the recruitment of thousands of workers as members' and staged a 'general conference' which met in London on 7 July 1928. It attracted 343 delegates who claimed to represent 'some 100,000 workers in the London area alone'.[157] In contrast to the 'sane imperialist' doctrines of MacDonald and Brailsford, with their appeals to the League of Nations, what was articulated here, as in Brussels, was unambiguously anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist. It resolved to struggle against 'world imperialism' in order to secure world peace and a resolution was passed which pledged to support the struggles of 'all colonial people fighting our common enemy, the British capitalist class, even when such struggles aim for complete independence from the British Empire'.[158] The LAI did not demand that these anti-colonial movements had to subscribe to socialist or communist doctrines before

[152] Ibid.
[153] Kenneth Lunn, 'Arthur James Cook' in A. Thomas Lane (ed.), *Biographical Dictionary of European Labour Leaders* (Connecticut, 1995), p. 217.
[154] Memorandum 'League Against Imperialism', p. 4. Public Record Office DO 117 /138.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid., pp. 8-9.
[158] Ibid., p. 9

pledging its support. For example, strong links were forged with the Indian National Congress and the LAI called for 'complete national independence and for the election of a representative constituent assembly to decide the future of India'.[159]

In the summer of 1928, Maxton and Cook co-authored a document which soon became known as the 'Maxton-Cook manifesto', accompanied by a more detailed pamphlet titled *Our Case For A Socialist Revival* which outlined their aspirations for the labour movement.[160] A key part of this renewal involved a radical break, not only from mainstream Labour's imperial policy, but also from the ILP's *Socialism and the Empire*.

> Socialism to our mind involves the end of class and racial domination. While it envisages the world co-operation of nationalities on a free basis, and possibly even the merging together of existing nationalities into larger units, it cannot regard the development of large empires based on national suppression and exploitation as a step towards socialism. Indeed the dissolution of these empires is a necessary step to rational world co-operation.[161]

The tract directly challenged the claim made by MacDonald and others that Labour must adopt a 'realistic' attitude: 'We are frequently told in the Labour Movement that the empire is a fact. The revolt of colonial peoples against Imperialist domination is equally a fact'.[162]

Therefore, given this fact, the duty of the British labour movement was to support 'the complete right of self-determination for all colonial peoples, including the right to choose independence'.[163] Yet, the class dimension had not been discarded as crucially, the rationale for pursuing this policy was that colonial revolts were 'directed against the same ruling class as the workers are fighting here at home'.[164] Furthermore, it was also the task of organised British labour to establish 'special relations' with the fledgling labour movements in the colonies so that the latter could 'develop that movement from one of

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[159] Ibid.
[160] The majority of *Our Case For A Socialist Revival* was written by Maxton, see Gordon Brown, *Maxton* (London, 2002), p. 211. For details of the campaign see Knox, *Maxton*, pp. 72-77.
[161] A. J. Cook and James Maxton, *Our Case For a Socialist Revival* (London, 1928), p. 21. LSE, ILP/5/1924/11.
[162] Ibid.
[163] Ibid.
[164] Ibid.

national emancipation to one of social emancipation'.[165] Thus, while the previous 'paternalistic' policy sought to aide workers' movements within the empire, this strategy envisioned the end of empire as an essential prerequisite to the success of the colonial workers' movements. Socialism could not be brought from the outside, either by a Labour government or the ILO, but instead had to be won by the colonial labour movements themselves. Brockway certainly saw the LAI to be the 'counterpart in foreign affairs' to the Maxton-Cook campaign.[166] However, despite its advocacy of anti-colonialism, Münzenberg perceived the campaign to be a distraction from Maxton's role in the LAI.[167] There was some truth to this, given that Maxton was unable to attend the first conference of the British LAI in London owing to the fact that he was in Glasgow addressing a special meeting of the Scottish ILP in order to deal with criticisms of the Maxton-Cook campaign.[168]

The manifesto also revealed that another key factor in joining the LAI was an increasing disillusionment with the League of Nations. Unlike Brailsford, who maintained that the League might still be reformed, Maxton and Cook argued that the League could no longer ensure peace and feared that working-class 'co-operation with the capitalist class during times of peace' through the League, 'will be a prelude to co-operation with the capitalist class in time of war'.[169] This left the 'international solidarity of the working class in its struggle against Capitalism' with workers 'standing on an independent basis' as the 'only potent instrument for preventing capitalist war'.[170] The LAI therefore offered an alternative organisation through which this new strategy could be pursued. However, the ILP did not immediately cease with all of its League of Nations related activity. For instance, in November 1928, it accepted an invitation to have ILP representation at a League of Nations Union conference on armaments and the Pact of Paris, sending their leading figures Maxton, Brockway and Brailsford.[171] Furthermore, despite endorsing the Maxton-Cook manifesto, Brockway did not appear to share this analysis, given that the

[165] Ibid.
[166] 'The League Against Imperialism', *The Times*, 9 July 1928.
[167] Middlemas, *Clydesiders*, p. 228.
[168] 'League Against Imperialism: First British Conference', *New Leader*, 13 July 1928.
[169] A. J. Cook and James Maxton, *Our Case For a Socialist Revival* (London, 1928), p. 21.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Minutes of the Meeting of the National Administrative Council of the Independent Labour Party, November 1928, p. 10.

ILP's resolution to the LSI conference in 1928 accepted the idea that the League should have a role in preventing colonial exploitation.[172]

Maxton continued to try to influence Labour Party policy. In his capacity as chairman of the LAI, he issued an open letter to the Labour Party conference of 1928 which called on delegates to reconsider those sections of the NEC's report and party programme which pledged Labour to 'maintain the imperialist system and actually made it easier, by changes proposed, for capitalism to continue the exploitation of Colonial countries'.[173] MacDonald criticised his ILP colleagues, declaring of the LAI: 'Monkeying with revolution at a safe distance is not the sort of thing in which we should indulge'.[174] Instead, he assured the electorate that 'the Labour policy is altogether different'.[175] In *Forward* Bridgeman responded by stating 'MacDonald seems to regard Nationalism as a greater evil than Imperialism'.[176] However, it appears that MacDonald overstated the extent to which this stance was electorally damaging. Despite the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations distributing literature in Bridgeton and Uxbridge which highlighted their involvement in the LAI and asked, 'Do you want to support Revolution and Smash up the Empire?', Maxton was returned with an increased majority while Bridgeman significantly increased the Labour vote.[177]

After the election, Bridgeman and MacDonald continued to clash when a public debate was held on the subject of imperialism, an encounter which plainly illustrated the opposing stances on empire. Opening the debate, Bridgeman accused Labour of denouncing the LAI as communist without 'any proof'.[178] Significantly, MacDonald argued that the difference between the LAI and Labour was not opinion but tactics. MacDonald stressed that 'legislative machinery' could be used to attain its ideals, whereas the LAI believed only in 'the armed uprising of the proletariat'. For MacDonald, Labour, as a socialist party was axiomatically against imperialism and therefore the creation of the LAI was unnecessary. However, MacDonald suggested that anti-colonial views could be tolerated within the Labour Party, claiming that he would 'welcome Mr

[172] ILP, *Annual Report 1928*, pp. 47-50.
[173] 'Mr Maxton's Open Letter', *The Times,* 3 October 1928.
[174] 'Two Voices', *The Times,* 3 April 1929.
[175] Ibid.
[176] 'Ramsay MacDonald and the League Against Imperialism', *Forward*, 30 January 1929. DBN 25/3.
[177] 'Letters', *The Middlesex Advertiser and County Gazette*, 13 June 1930. DBN/6.
[178] 'Party or League?', *Ibid.,* 29 May 1930. DBN/4/4.

Bridgeman back into the Labour Party tomorrow' if he severed his connections with the LAI.[179]

The LAI claimed that it involved genuine unity and mutual collaboration across a relatively wide political and social spectrum. Münzenberg contended that the LAI was based on:

> (The) co-operation of the representatives of the oppressed peoples, national revolutionary organisations and left wing intellectuals with socialists, communists and other Labour Organisations… Every Communist or Syndicalist who joins the League to-day must be prepared to co-operate with the Socialists of the British Independent Labour Party. But every Socialist or bourgeois intellectual who enters the League must remember that he can only do so if he is seriously prepared to work together with Communists.[180]

Münzenberg wrote that 'from this principle, the League cannot deviate by a hair's breadth'.[181] However, this co-operation was short-lived, and the developments appear to confirm the communists' grip on the organisation. With the adoption of the 'class against class' formulation, after the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in August 1928, the Communist Party began to criticise social democrats in increasingly strong terms. Accordingly, at the second world congress of the LAI, held at Frankfurt in July 1929, the atmosphere had profoundly changed from the one of unity professed at Brussels. Although Maxton presided over the conference, the ILP came under serious criticism from many delegates.[182] Maxton responded to these claims by promising to fulfil his 'duty' to forcefully oppose Labour's imperialist policies. He assured the conference that:

> I pledge myself, and those associated with me, to the League to carry out this duty openly and fearlessly, recognising that the pursuance of an imperialist policy by the Labour Government constitutes the most deadly menace to the interests of the oppressed masses of the colonies. [183]

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[179] Ibid.
[180] Memorandum 'League Against Imperialism', p. 16. PRO, DO 117 /138.
[181] Maxton, 'Foreword', *The Anti-Imperialist Review,* July 1928, Volume 1, No. 1, p. 8.
[182] Petersson, *Willi Münzenberg, The League Against Imperialism, and the Comintern,* p. 320 and pp. 328-329.
[183] *Report of the National Conference of the League Against Imperialism British Section* (London, 1931), pp. 8-9; Maxton's statement during the evening session, July 26, 1929, Frankfurt am Main. IISH, LSI Archives, 3050/62-63.

These criticisms from the LAI highlighted the relative marginalism of the ILP within the Labour Party. The ILP's apparent numeric strength ultimately operated on a very superficial level, as it did not translate into anything like substantial influence over the direction of the Labour government's policy. Although many Labour MPs elected in 1929 were ILPers, only 37 were ILP-sponsored candidates and only around 20 of these were actually supportive of Maxton's more radical socialist programme.[184] As Maxton admitted to the Frankfurt conference, 'There are many elements within the ILP who do not support my anti-imperialist policy and tactics and my association with the League. They may even be the majority of the party'.[185] This was demonstrated when Bridgeman's attempt to pass a resolution at the ILP's annual dissociating the ILP from the LSI's colonial policy was heavily defeated.[186] Thus, Imlay's claim that Bridgeman's response indicated that 'the ILP… was disappointed' with the outcome is not sustainable given that Bridgeman's views were not representative of the majority opinion within the ILP.[187] Nevertheless, Maxton stressed that as chairman he would, 'fight for the adoption of a militant policy against Imperialism', assuring his audience that 'those in the ranks of the Party who wish a moderate reformist policy will be discarded'.[188] It may well have been the case that activists from such a centralised, disciplined organisation as the Communist Party were at a loss to comprehend how Maxton, as party chairman, could not ensure that ILP members adhered to the leadership's policy.

By this time, ILP enthusiasm for the project had evidently waned. In a report in the *New Leader* on the ILP's summer school in August 1929, it was noted that 'the political wisdom' of Maxton going to Frankfurt 'was in doubt'.[189] The only value was in a 'social sense' as Maxton had 'brought back with him a new song, which he taught to the school, until the roof nearly fell in with noise'.[190] In contrast to Brussels, the Frankfurt congress did not generate much coverage in the party's paper.[191] Although Maxton's speech had been reported, a key passage which referred to challenging imperialism within the ILP

[184] Neil Riddell, *Labour in Crisis: The Second Labour Government 1929-31* (Manchester, 1999), p. 27.
[185] *Report of the National Conference of the League Against Imperialism (British Section),* pp. 8-9.
[186] ILP, *Annual Conference 1929,* pp. 63-64.
[187] Imlay, *The Practice of Socialist Internationalism,* p. 241.
[188] *Report of the National Conference of the League Against Imperialism (British Section),* pp. 8-9.
[189] 'The ILP at School', *New Leader,* 9 August 1929.
[190] Ibid.
[191] T.P.S., 'League Against Imperialism', *New Leader,* 9 August 1929.

had been omitted.[192] Therefore, it was not without cause that in the communist *Labour Monthly*, Emile Burns argued that the *New Leader* had produced a 'completely emasculated version of Maxton's statement'.[193] Writing to the *New Leader,* in his capacity as secretary of the British section of the LAI, Bridgeman praised Maxton for taking a 'clear line' on the subject imperialism and expressed disappointment in the NAC. He drew attention to Maxton's comments at Frankfurt: 'Maxton is right', he declared 'and the struggle against imperialism will have to be carried on, not inside the Labour Party only but inside the Independent Labour Party as well'.[194] In his editorial notes, Ernest Hunter questioned whether Maxton had been quoted correctly and dismissed the comments regarding the alleged imperialism within the ILP as 'exaggerated nonsense'.[195]

The Executive of the British section demanded that Maxton immediately publish his statement made at Frankfurt in the *New Leader* and in addition, explicitly express his opposition to Government policy in Egypt and Palestine.[196] Bridgeman wrote to Maxton several times. But Maxton refused, saying that while he stood by what he had said, he would not be 'bullied, harassed or pestered' as to his methods.[197] Therefore, the LAI concluded that Maxton had 'made no attempts publicly to fight [Labour's] imperialist policy or carry out his pledges' which he had made at Frankfurt and moved to expel him.[198] In his memoirs, Brockway recalled that the reason for this was that 'the Communists decided against an ILP chairmanship and a small excuse was made to depose him'.[199] However, the views expressed in the *New Leader* on Palestine and Egypt were clearly contrary to the perspective of the LAI; therefore, taken at face-value, the claims cited were reasonable. After all, the *New Leader* was, in the words of the party, the 'official organ of the ILP' in which Maxton had his own weekly column. However, Maxton did not use this platform to offer alternative analysis. As Bridgeman commented, although he felt 'regret' at the decision and opined that if Maxton had attended the Executive Committee meetings 'the position would probably have been quite different', he had nevertheless 'apparently shown no interest in events of tremendous importance in

[192] Ibid.
[193] Emile Burns, 'World Congress of the League Against Imperialism', *Labour Monthly,* September 1929.
[194] 'Letters: NAC and Imperialism', *New Leader,* 23 August 1929.
[195] Ibid.
[196] *Report of the National Conference of the League Against Imperialism*, 1931, p. 10.
[197] Ibid.
[198] Ibid., p. 9.
[199] Brockway, *Inside the Left,* p. 168.

colonial countries'.[200] Indeed, Bridgeman believed this had created 'the impression' that Maxton was 'looking for an opportunity to resign'.[201] This was not without foundation given that at Frankfurt, Maxton had claimed he could not 'remain silent' on issues such as Egyptian independence that if he was judged to have failed he would 'take the consequences'.[202] Such evidence appears to present a more nuanced version of the reasons behind Maxton's expulsion, rather than it being purely the result of communist sectarianism. As Marwick perceptibly noted, while the Comintern's 'tougher line' was unquestionably an important factor; it had to be 'admitted that Maxton himself was not altogether consistent'.[203] Although Cook and others resigned, some ILPers who were close political allies of Maxton such as Bridgeman and Gossip, as well several ILP branches continued to be active in the LAI after his exclusion.[204]

Initially, Maxton had been portrayed as someone who was himself genuinely committed to the LAI's programme but needed to be considerably more vociferous in his criticisms of fellow socialists.[205] But now he was deemed to be an outright charlatan. Saklatvala stated that the LAI 'cannot be used as a forum by politicians who wish to gain popularity in the colonies by using radical anti-imperialist phrases at international gatherings but who do everything in their own country to support the imperialist policy of their own government'.[206] Maxton was accused of playing a 'dangerous and demoralising role' within the LAI and the charge was made that the ILP had 'hypocritically made a pretence of seeming sympathy (sic) with Indian nationalism but in the decisive moment it has always supported the imperialist policy of McDonald'.[207] The international executive confirmed Maxton's expulsion, branding him 'a traitor to the anti-imperialist movement'.[208]

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[200] Bridgeman to F. Gardner, 21 September 1929. DBN/4/3.
[201] Ibid.
[202] 'Mr Maxton and Imperialism', *The Times*, 20 September 1929.
[203] Marwick, 'James Maxton', p. 39.
[204] *Report of the Second Annual Conference of the League Against Imperialism British Section*, 1932, p. 6. DBN/25/1.
[205] 'Manifesto of the Second World Congress of the League Against Imperialism', p. 3. IISH, LAI, 78.
[206] *Report of the National Conference of the League Against Imperialism British Section* (London, 1931), pp. 12-13.
[207] 'The Colonial Policy of the European Social Democratic Parties', *The Anti-Imperialist Review*, September-October 1931, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 4.
[208] *The Colonies and Oppressed Nations in the Struggle for Freedom: Resolutions Adopted by the Executive Committee of the League Against Imperialism* (Berlin, 1931), p. 10.

Through the *New Leader,* the ILP backed its chairman. Hunter emphasised that Maxton had taken 'considerable risks' in his association with the LAI and had persisted 'despite the advice of close political colleagues' because he believed this work to be 'an essential service to the subject races'.[209] Furthermore, he agreed with Maxton's refusal to print his Frankfurt statement as 'no responsible officer' of the ILP 'would seek to command its columns at the bidding of an outside organisation'.[210] The *Socialist Review* branded the LAI a 'farcical organisation' and gave a platform to Bart de Ligt of the International Anti-Militarist Bureau who criticised the LAI.[211]

Yet this experience did not alter the ILP leadership's vision of the possibility and the necessity of a united working-class movement. As such, despite what Maxton described as a 'somewhat ignominious failure' in the LAI, he immediately 'set about trying to develop schemes for an international united working class through other methods'.[212] This was required because, 'the main problems of today are not only British problems, they are world problems'.[213] Neither did it affect the party's stance on anti-colonial movements. Maxton reiterated the position of being in favour of independence whilst insisting that socialism should be the ultimate aim of any nationalist movement, 'I am not primarily concerned with Indian national independence. India, I think should rule itself… My concern is… in the struggle of the poor people, the working classes, for economic and social liberation'.[214]

Maxton's expulsion from the LAI did not prevent the CPGB and the ILP from working together on anti-colonial issues, most notably demonstrated by the Meerut Prisoners' Defence Committee in 1930.[215] Here, the ILP once more came into serious conflict with the Labour Party, with the ILP accusing the Labour government of 'tyranny' in India and branding it a 'disgrace' which had brought 'humiliation and shame' upon the Labour Party.[216] Nonetheless, lasting damage was done, and when the Communist Party moved

[209] 'The League Against Imperialism', *New Leader,* 27 September 1929.
[210] Ibid.
[211] Bart de Ligt, 'Anti-Imperialism', *Socialist Review,* October 1929, pp. 32-39.
[212] James Maxton, *Where the ILP Stands: Presidential Address of J. Maxton MP to the ILP Conference Together with the Declaration on the Relation of the ILP to the Labour Party*. (London, 1930), pp. 12-13. LSE, ILP 5 1930/19.
[213] Ibid.
[214] Quoted in William Knox, *James Maxton* (Manchester, 1987), p. 89.
[215] Dabney Pennybacker, *From Scotsboro to Munich*, p. 175.
[216] Fenner Brockway, *India's Challenge* (London, 1930), p. 11. LSE, ILP 5 1930/8.

away from its sectarianism and the ILP was invited to send delegates to the LAI congress of 1932, the NAC declined.[217] However, Maxton did renew contact with the British section of the LAI and raised questions in parliament on its behalf.[218] In addition, both Maxton and Kirkwood spoke up for right of the LAI to operate freely after the Home Secretary revealed that its activities were being monitored by the government.[219] Furthermore, despite the acrimonious experience of LAI, in 1932 the ILP leadership backed another Münzenberg-inspired group, 'The Congress Against War and Fascism', which involved a number of current and ex-LAI members.[220]

Disaffiliation and 'Revolutionary Socialism': 1932-1939

In 1932 the ILP disaffiliated from the Labour Party which signalled the completion of its leftward shift into its 'revolutionary phase'.[221] In the words of its general secretary John Paton, it represented a 'complete break' with the past traditions of the ILP which was 'now definitely committed to policies of revolutionary Socialism'. It was the 'application of its militant Socialist ideas to the new situation created by the world crisis of capitalism'.[222]

This section will examine how the adoption of a 'revolutionary policy' was reflected in its international outlook examining questions such as its international associations, colonial policy, and attitudes towards the Soviet Union. In the same year as disaffiliation the ILP became the driving force behind the so-called 'Third and a Half International'.[223] The organisation went through several name changes; it was initially named the Committee of Independent Revolutionary Socialist Parties before becoming known as the International Revolutionary Marxist Centre and later the International Bureau of Revolutionary Socialist Unity.[224] It was also known as the 'London Bureau'; a moniker which indicated

[217] Minutes of the NAC of the ILP, 30 April 1932, p. 5.
[218] *Report of the Second Annual Conference of the League Against Imperialism British Section*, 1932, pp. 1-2.
[219] H.C. Deb., 10 May 1934, vol. 289, cols. 1234-6.
[220] 'World Anti-War Congress', IISH, 284.
[221] Indeed, the ILP now had a section known as the 'Marxist Group' which was Trotskyist in its outlook. For a full account of the ILP during the 1930s see Gidon Cohen, *The Failure of a Dream: The Independent Labour Party From Disaffiliation to World War II* (London, 2007).
[222] *Conference of the Left Wing Parties and Groups in Berlin 5th-6th May, 1932.* p. 6.
[223] See Imlay, *Practice of Socialist Internationalism*, pp. 52-60.
[224] Bullock, *Under Siege: The Independent Labour Party in Interwar Britain* (Edmonton, 2017), p. 292.

the ILP's dominance within the organisation. However, the function of the organisation was not to be a new International. Instead,

> The Bureau is an association of Revolutionary Socialist parties unaffiliated to either the Second or Third international. The purpose of the Bureau is to develop common, international action between its own sections and with other revolutionary sections of the working class movement, with the object of preparing for the formation of a reconstituted International on a Revolutionary Socialist basis.[225]

In this respect, as the 'Third and a half international' label suggests, the IBSRU can be seen as a resumption of the policy pursued by the Vienna International between 1918 and 1921, namely an international socialist organisation which did not function as a new international in itself, but whose main purpose was play the role of unifier and bring together the two internationals. The ILP hoped this organisation would 'unite all the real revolutionary sections of the working class'.[226]

By the mid-1930s, the ILP wanted to maintain 'the widest friendly cooperation with the Communist International', arguing that the LSI had 'broken down' and was 'of no effective service to the working class'.[227] In contrast to Labour's gradualism and constitutionalism, Brockway called for the 'coming together' of the 'revolutionary forces of the working class' which would not just defeat fascism but advance Europe from 'Capitalist Democracy' to 'Workers' Power'.[228] The party denounced the League of Nations as a 'Capitalist institution' and criticised the Soviet Union for its membership. By placing its faith in the League, the social democratic movement had 'substituted collaboration with International Capitalism for its war-time policy of collaboration with National Capitalism'.[229] For the ILP it was 'illogical' that the Labour Party should trust the British government to serve working-class interests in the League of Nations and yet oppose the same government nationally.[230] The party's literature openly lamented the fact

[225] *Report of the Meeting of the Independent Committee of the International Revolutionary Socialist Parties, London, January 1934*, p. 15.
[226] IBRSU, *Through the Class Struggle to Socialism: Being Resolutions Adopted at Annual Conference* (London, 1937), p. 10.
[227] *A Lead to World Socialism: Report of Revolutionary Socialist Congress Brussels, October 31-November 2nd, 1936* (London, 1936).
[228] Ibid.
[229] Ibid., p. 9.
[230] John McGovern, *Fight The Enemy Here!* (London, 1936), p. 4. LSE ILP/5/1936/16.

that the working class movement had 'fallen into the trap' of supporting the League of Nations in the post-war era.[231] Disaffiliation from Labour was certainly accompanied by an increasingly radical rhetoric. Brockway told the IBRSU conference of 1936 that the reason why 'working class parties and governments had failed' was that both had 'departed from the basis of the class struggle which Marx and Engels laid down'.[232]

The IBRSU incorporated many aspects of the LAI. It did not just unite like-minded socialist parties but sought to support and make links with anti-colonial nationalist movements. Its colonial policy was virtually identical to that espoused by the LAI. Thus, it believed in the 'right of subject peoples to national independence' and that this claim should be supported by socialists even when this claim was advanced by 'national organisations of a bourgeois character'.[233] As such, at one conference, organisations such as the Senegal League for the Defence of Blacks, the Indo-Chinese Colonial Union, the Madagascar National Liberation Society and the Pondicherry Native Trade Unions were all represented. Brockway spoke of the IBRSU as an organisation which could 'link up and co-ordinate all of the workers' and peasants' Colonial organisations into centre of anti-imperialist activity'.[234] After the demise of the LAI, it still remained 'the duty of the Revolutionary Socialist Movement' to 'recreate an International anti-Imperialist Movement'.[235] Furthermore, the IBRSU maintained that the LSI had a 'Socialist-Imperialist' attitude. Once again, India was a central issue. Here, the IBRSU engaged in practical assistance, such as raising money to help fund the appeal of imprisoned Indian nationalist and revolutionary M. N. Roy. The Bureau believed that the attempts of fascist movements to support nationalist movements within the British Empire added an additional urgency to their anti-colonial efforts.[236] As the British section of the LAI had done, the ILP made efforts to inform British public opinion about the empire. In response to the Empire Exhibition, the ILP held their own 'Anti-Empire Exhibition' in order to 'show the workers the intolerable conditions of the empire and the necessity of their support for the anti-Imperialist struggle'.[237]

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[231] Ibid.
[232] *A Lead to World Socialism*, p. 5.
[233] *A New Hope for World Socialism: The Resolutions Adopted at the Revolutionary Socialist Congress, Paris February 1938* (London, 1938), p. 35.
[234] Ibid., p. 34.
[235] Ibid., p. 37.
[236] Ibid., p. 38.
[237] Arthur Ballard, 'We Are Going to Run an Anti-Empire Exhibition!', *New Leader*, 3 June 1938.

The ILP's more 'militant' political outlook was reflected in the party's response to specific international developments. For instance, the Spanish Civil War in 1936 marked a clear shift away from its traditional pacifism.[238] By the party's own reckoning, approximately 5,000 of its members had been imprisoned for their opposition to the First World War.[239] This position was retained in peace time, despite the use of revolutionary violence by the labour movement in Russia and Germany. In 1918, the party declared itself to be against 'militarism in all forms, including the 'Citizen Army' project'.[240] Furthermore, in the early 1920s Brockway who himself had been imprisoned for his pacifist activities wrote, 'I want to make myself quite clear. I do not believe in the use of violence and bloodshed under any conditions whatsoever… the right way to resist a tyranny is not to kill the tyrant but to refuse to cooperate in his tyranny'. [241] In the years after the war, Brockway had chaired the No More War Movement (NMWM), founded in 1921 as the British section of the War Resisters International (WRI) and the successor to the No Conscription Fellowship.[242]

However, ILP propaganda now praised its members who had gone to fight in Spain. The ILP contingent that had joined with the P.O.U.M. Militia was lauded. Its annual report claimed that 'the whole party takes pride in the contingent and recognises its part in the Spanish struggle as one of the finest acts of international solidarity in our records'.[243] Indeed, Brockway wrote in his memoirs, 'In a sense, the Spanish Civil War settled this dilemma for me; I could no longer justify pacifism when there was a fascist threat'.[244] In 1936 he resigned from the NMWM and now explicitly defended the right of the labour

[238] One of the most famous accounts of the Spanish Civil War, *Homage to Catalonia*, (London, 1938), was produced by ILPer George Orwell. For accounts of the British labour movement's involvement in the Spanish Civil War see Tom Buchanan, *The Spanish Civil War and the British Labour Movement* (Cambridge, 1991); Buchanan, *The Impact of the Spanish Civil War on Britain: Loss and Memory* (Eastbourne, 2007) This includes an essay on the death of ILP POUM volunteer Bob Smilie. James Hopkins, *In the Heart of the Fire: the British in the Spanish Civil War* (Stanford, 1998); Lewis Mates, *The Spanish Civil War and the British Left: Political Activism and the Popular Front* (London, 2007).
[239] McGovern, *Fight The Enemy Here!* p. 7.
[240] *The Independent Labour Party Report of the Twenty Seventh Annual Conference* (London, 1919), p. 25. ILP 5/1919/74.
[241] Fenner Brockway, *Non-Co-operation in Other Lands* (London, 1921), p. ii. LSE Archive, ILP Pamphlets, ILP/5/1921/6.
[242] Brockway, *Inside the Left*, pp. 130-131.
[243] *Annual Report of the National Administrative Council of the Independent Labour Party* (London, 1937), p. 4. LSE, ILP/5/1937/1.
[244] Fenner Brockway, *Towards Tomorrow: The Autobiography of Fenner Brockway* (London, 1977), p. 136.

movement to use violence: 'Thus I came to see that it is not the amount of violence used which determines good or evil results, but the ideas, the sense of human values, and above all the social forces behind its use'.[245]

During the mid-1930s the ILP began to adopt an increasingly critical approach towards the Soviet Union regarding several issues. It argued that the Moscow trials and Trotsky's repudiation of the allegations had 'raised issues which affected not only Soviet Russia but the whole International working class movement' and called for an 'impartial investigation by representative socialists'.[246] Whilst maintaining that a 'temporary dictatorship' was necessary in order to secure working class power in Russia in the years after the revolution, concerns were voiced that dictatorship may 'become an instrument… for the retention of bureaucratic power'.[247] Conversely, in the mid-1920s Maxton and Cook had described socialist criticism of the Soviet Union 'whatever the intentions of its authors' as being 'a contribution to imperialist war propaganda'.[248] Not only was its involvement in the League of Nations disapproved of, but the Soviet Union's perceived lack of support for nationalist anti-colonial movements was also criticised. The IBRSU accused it of having 'surrendered the fight against Imperialism whenever it conflicts with the present foreign policy of the Soviet Union'.[249]

Conclusion

Like the Labour party, the ILP contained conflicting perspectives and as such, was not a homogenous or monolithic section within the party. This has been recognised by several historians of the party's domestic activities. For example, Gidon Cohen has noted that the ILP parliamentary group was 'politically very diverse, covering almost the entire range of opinion within the labour movement'.[250] This was not confined to its parliamentary members; as David Howell has written, the ILP in the 1920s had become 'a forum for a diverse range of projects and sentiments'.[251] Even disaffiliation, a decisive victory for the

[245] Ibid. Brockway's transformation has been noted in Martin Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain 1914-1945: The Defining of a Faith* (London, 1980), p. 198.
[246] *Through the Class Struggle to Socialism: Being Resolutions Adopted at Annual Conference* (London, 1937), p. 10. ILP/ 5/1937/16.
[247] Ibid.
[248] Maxton and Cook, *Our Case for A Socialist Revival,* p. 21.
[249] *A New Hope for World Socialism,* p. 36.
[250] Cited in Matthew Worley, *Labour Inside the Gate: A History of the British Labour Party Between the Wars* (2005), p. 126.
[251] David Howell, MacDonald's *Party: Labour Identities and Crisis 1922-31* (Oxford 2002).

left within the party, did not resolve these divisions as there still existed an 'organised minority with its directing committee and its own publications'.[252]

In terms of internationalism, prior to disaffiliation there were essentially three perspectives within the ILP. The 'left' lead by Maxton and Brockway, the 'liberals' like Brailsford and Wedgwood, and those members in government such as MacDonald and Snowden who implemented mainstream Labour policies. The left called for independent workers' activism, the ultimate aim of which was the destruction of imperialism and capitalism. The liberal wing stressed the political and economic cooperation of nation-states via international institutions such as the League of Nations and demanded a form of colonial administration which would benefit native populations. MacDonald's administrations, at least in terms of colonial policy, differed little from previous British imperial policy.[253] Therefore, it is hardly surprising that Labour's imperial policy was criticised by the left, given that it fell considerably short even of the 'constructivist' imperialism envisaged by the liberal section, and indeed advocated by MacDonald himself. However, even within these sections there was not always complete internal cohesion. For instance, Maxton and Brockway clashed over the correct line to adopt with respect to Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia.[254]

Much of the scholarship regarding the ILP's estrangement and eventual disaffiliation from the Labour Party has centred around the sharp ideological clashes over domestic issues, demonstrated by the issuing of tracts such as *Socialism in Our Time* in 1926 and the 'Maxton-Cook Manifesto' of 1928. The former document demanded that Labour introduce a national minimum wage and nationalise key industries, while the latter was a clear repudiation of gradualism. However, the profound critiques over activities within various transnational organisations set out in the manifesto should not be overlooked.

Moreover, disagreements over international and colonial policy were the source of dramatic clashes between Labour and the ILP. It was during a parliamentary debate on

[252] *Conference of the 'Left Wing Parties' in Berlin 5-6th May 1932*, p. 6.
[253] Jon Sheppard, 'A Gentleman at the Foreign Office: Influences Shaping Ramsay MacDonald's Internationalism in 1924' in Paul Corthorn and Jonathan Davis (eds.), *The British Labour Party and the Wider World: Domestic Politics, Internationalism and Foreign Policy* (London, 2008), p. 44.
[254] Paul Corthorn, *In the Shadow of Dictators: The British Left in the 1930s* (London, 2006), p. 56.

India in 1930 that John Beckett seized the mace.[255] In the same year, a resolution at the Labour Party conference which called for dominion status for India was rejected by the ILP, which moved instead for self-determination and an immediate end to the suppression of the nationalist movement.[256] In fact, post-disaffiliation, when the ILP was criticised by the CPGB's Pollitt for not being prepared to consider re-affiliation with Labour, Brockway defended this position explicitly on the ILP's strong objections to Labour's colonial policy:

> The Labour Party's record on India alone is enough to make clear why we cannot under present conditions, join the Labour Party. Every Indian will remember how the Labour Party participated in the Simon Commission… every Indian will remember how the Labour Government suppressed the civil disobedience movement, imprisoned sixty thousand Indians for the crime of demanding independence, maintained the infamous Meerut trial, and arrested Gandhi and other leaders. When the Labour Party was in office its rule was as Imperialist as the rule of any Capitalist Government.[257]

Indeed, advancing self-determination for India was equally as crucial as pursuing socialism domestically, as Brockway elucidated that 'The ILP cannot give up its championship of the rights of India, any more than it can give up its struggle for uncompromising Socialism'.[258]

The emphasis placed upon international questions not only adversely affected relations with the Labour Party, but also apparently partly informed the rationale of some ILP members who left to join the British fascist movement. In particular, the attempt to move away from Eurocentrism and make links with movements in the colonies appears to have frustrated Oswald Mosley and John Beckett. After visiting Mussolini's Italy, Beckett, who had attended the founding conference of the LAI in Brussels and served on the British section's executive committee, dismissively commented: 'I had long felt that progress in Britain need not wait for the Zulus to join their union and the Japanese to

[255] Keith Middlemass, *The Clydesiders: A Left-Wing Struggle For Parliamentary Power* (London, 1965), p. 246.
[256] Knox, *Maxton*, p. 89.
[257] *Revolutionary Socialist Bulletin*, January 1936, p. 15.
[258] Ibid.

become members of the Third International'.[259] In a similarly derogatory vein, Mosley complained that the 'socialist policy of internationalism' meant that Britain would be 'held back until every Cannibal Islander sees the world in gentle shades of pink and joins the ILP'.[260] In 1934, Beckett joined with ex-ILPers Mosley and Robert Forgan in the BUF before becoming a founder member of the fascist National Socialist League in 1937.[261]

Although the ILP's leadership's formal association with the LAI lasted only from February 1927 to September 1929, it certainly had a profound impact upon the direction of the party. The foray into the LAI indicated a shift from anti-imperialism to anti-colonialism, that is to say, advocating the dissolution rather than the transformation of empire, which was maintained as party policy even after the party leadership's acrimonious exit from the LAI. There were several reasons behind the ILP's involvement. The first was the belief that the LSI had failed to adopt the correct strategy regarding the colonial question and was too Eurocentric in its outlook. The second was that the League of Nations had become unfit for purpose, could not be reformed and that involvement in it amounted to collaboration with the capitalist class. The third was that an initiative such as the LAI could play an instrumental role in the unification of the international working-class movement. And finally, that by engaging with nationalist movements, socialists could influence them towards internationalism.

It is an irony that the ILP leadership were forced out at a time when its colonial policy was moving towards that of the communist left. By rights, the ILP should not have been admitted to the LAI given its official colonial policy still repudiated the idea of the end of empire and believed many 'races' to be incapable of self-government. Yet, by 1929, the ILP leadership was increasingly critical of Labour in government's colonial policy. Moreover, the ILP was actively striving for the LSI to adopt a more anti-colonial position on empire.[262] Two key factors counted against the ILP. One was the communist's 'class against class' policy. The second was the colonial policy of the MacDonald government, elected in June 1929, which meant that the ILP now formed a section of a party that was

[259] Quoted in David Howell, *MacDonald's Party: Labour Identities and Crisis 1922-31* (Oxford, 2002), p. 302.
[260] 'Black and Red Shirts at Mosley-Maxton Debate', *Daily Mail*, 25 February 1933.
[261] Richard C. Thurlow, *Fascism in Britain From Oswald Mosley to the National Front* (London, 2006), p. 67. and p. 140.
[262] Howe, *Anti-Colonialism in British Politics*, p. 70.

not only administering empire, but doing so in a manner that was almost indistinguishable from that of its Tory predecessors. Again, Labour in government highlighted the dilemma for the anti-imperialist activists within its own ranks. When Maxton and Cook formulated their policy in 1928, it was uncomplicated to speak of the colonial movements and the British labour movement both fighting the same ruling class, given that the Conservatives were in power. The episode also proved an instructive example of how attempts at unity and collaboration between the non-communist and communist left proved futile and damaged the ILP.[263] Its association with the Labour Party and the LSI left it open to accusations from the communists of being aligned with the 'social imperialists', while the social democrats were appalled by the ILP's involvement in what it perceived as Moscow-inspired organisations.

Although the ILP's approach underwent a fundamental change as its leadership rejected the League of Nations, preferring independent workers activism which would end imperialism and capitalism, there was still a sense of continuity insofar as the ultimate aims remained the securing of world peace and the replacement of capitalism with socialism. Therefore, the essential shift was not in terms of aspiration but strategy. It was characterised by a rejection of attempting to secure change through official channels such as the ILO or the Simon Commission, as this amounted to 'collaboration' with capitalist institutions, in favour of workers and activists taking the initiative to create their own autonomous organisations.

[263] Williams, *Labour and Russia*, p. 50.

Chapter 2: The ILP and Palestine in the Interwar Years

During the interwar years, official Labour Party policy was overwhelmingly supportive of Zionism. As Christine Collette has argued, 'Labour Party files rarely show so consistent a pursuit of policy'.[1] An important contributing factor was that many of the wartime and post-war Liberal recruits to the ILP such as Angell, Josiah C. Wedgewood and Charles Roden Buxton were strong advocates of Zionism. Buxton joined the ILP in 1917 and over the next few years, published a number of pro-Zionist articles in the labour press.[2] Shortly before joining the ILP, Wedgwood remarked in February 1918 that he had 'been a Zionist for years'.[3] As Kelemen has pointed out, a year earlier, Wedgwood had become 'one of the first British politicians to publicly endorse Zionism'.[4] Wedgwood became a relentless advocate of Zionism. In the words of N. A. Rose, he was 'one of the foremost patrons of Zionism in England', evidenced by the pages of *Hansard* which are 'littered with his championship of the National Home'.[5] In the mid-1920s, Wedgwood was the author of two pro-Zionist works, *Palestine: The Fight For Jewish Freedom and Honour* and *The Seventh Dominion*. Wedgwood perceived his support for Zionism to be an expression of internationalism, telling a meeting of the 'United Palestine Appeal' in the USA that:

> … there could be no international spirit of brotherhood among the nations of the world as long as some citizens of free countries were kept in a semi-free condition. Zionism, with its goal of a rebuilt Jewish Homeland in Palestine, will create self-respect on the part of oppressed Jews and that respect for them which goes with being an independent and free people… It therefore paves the way for that international spirit of brotherhood among the nations which is the goal of all right-thinking people.[6]

Similarly, on another occasion, Wedgwood told an audience that he supported Zionism because 'Jews needed a place on the map in order to develop a national pride'. Only once this had been obtained they would 'be able to go forward to the further stage of developing that

[1] Collette, 'Utopian Visions of Labour Zionism', p. 78.
[2] Gorni, *British Labour Movement and Zionism*, p. 89.
[3] 'Wedgwood Favors Jewish Home Land', *The New York Times*, 4 February 1918.
[4] Kelemen, 'Labour Ideals and Colonial Pioneers', p. 31.
[5] N.A. Rose, *The Gentile Zionists: A Study in Anglo-Zionist Diplomacy* (London, 1973), p. 73.
[6] 'Zionists Honour Colonel Wedgwood at Farewell Luncheon: Sees Movement as Factor for Spirit of International Brotherhood', *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 29 January 1926.

international pride in which, someday, all narrow race prejudices would be submerged'.[7] Norman Angell, who was active in the UDC before joining the ILP in 1920 had forged his political reputation as an internationalist, most notably with his book *The Great Illusion*.[8] He was acutely aware that his support for a form of nationalism appeared to be contradictory. However, Angell contended that the 'seeming conflict of internationalism with Zionism' was actually 'an illusion'.[9] Like Wedgwood, Angell believed that Zionism, rather than conflicting with internationalism 'instead serves to fulfil it'. Therefore, he argued that the ideal system of international organisation 'must provide for the Jews as for other nationalities' as to omit the Jews from 'the world link' would be 'a fated mistake'.[10] This evidence contradicts David Cesarani's claim that in contrast to Wedgwood, Angell 'said nothing… in support of Zionism' and therefore was not a 'Gentile Zionist'.[11]

However, Labour's support for Zionism pre-dated much of this Liberal migration. Indeed, support for Zionism was one of Labour's first foreign policy statements, drafted by Sidney Webb and Arthur Henderson and presented to the Second Inter-Allied Socialist Conference in late August of 1917.[12]

> Palestine should be set free from the harsh and oppressive government of the Turk, in order that this country may form a Free State, under international guarantee, to which such of the Jewish people as desire to do so may return and may work out their salvation free from interference by those of alien race or religion.[13]

Commenting on Labour's recently published 'Memorandum on War Aims' in December 1917; Conservative MP William Ormsby-Gore critically remarked that 'the Labour party is more Zionist than the Zionists themselves'.[14] He believed that Labour did not give 'due credit

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[7] 'Col Wedgwood's Work for Zionism', *Manchester Guardian*, 28 September 1922.
[8] 'Norman Angell Sees World Peace Interlinked with Zionism', *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle,* 29 January 1932.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] David Cesarani, 'Mad Dogs and Englishmen: Towards a Taxonomy of Rescuers in a Bystander County – Britain 1933-45' in David Cesarani and Paul A. Levin (eds.), *Bystanders to the Holocaust: A Re-evaluation* (London, 2002), p. 51.
[12] Kelemen, 'Labour Ideals and Colonial Pioneers', p. 30.
[13] Labour Party and Trades Union Congress, *Memorandum on War Aims to be Presented to the Special Conference of the Labour Movement at the Central Hall Westminster, London on Friday, December 28th, 1917* (London, 1917).
[14] 'Appreciation of the Attached Eastern Report' no. XLVIII, December 1917', CAB 24 144.

to the aspirations and achievements of the Arabs'.[15] In contrast, Kelemen has argued that the 'War Aims' document did not go far enough for the Zionists.[16] Therefore, it would appear that Ormsby-Gore was simply using an exaggerated rhetorical phrase to express his displeasure at Labour's policy. Nevertheless, it should be recognised that in key respects, Labour's War Aims went further than the Balfour Declaration, a document which was often approvingly cited by the Zionist movement. Balfour's letter to Lord Rothschild gave assurances that despite facilitating Zionist immigration, it was 'clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine'.[17] However, Labour's policy made no such guarantee. Indeed, it appeared to render the native Palestinian Arabs an 'alien race' in their own land.[18] Secondly, Labour's declaration was explicit that a Jewish 'Free State' would be formed rather than Balfour's more ambiguous term of a 'National Home'. Thirdly, Labour's formulation implied that the entirety of Palestine should become a Jewish state, whereas Balfour's stated policy was to create a Jewish 'National Home' within Palestine. *Poale Zion* was evidently impressed by Labour's commitment and sent a message to the Second Inter-Allied Socialist conference congratulating British Labour's Palestine policy.[19]

Palestine proved to be a subject of considerable interest to several Labour figures in the interwar years. The ILP was no exception and prominent figures from across the party's political spectrum such as MacDonald, Brailsford, Wedgwood, Henry Nevinson, Campbell Stephen and John McGovern all visited Palestine during the interwar years, while Fenner Brockway wrote and spoke extensively about Palestine, particularly in the 1930s. Obviously, Palestine was of central concern to *Poale Zion* members, which affiliated to the Labour Party in 1920. The ILP had relatively few Jewish members and as scholar of Anglo-Jewry Sharman Kadish has noted, compared with the Communist Party, the ILP had little connection with the Jewish community in London's East End.[20] However, an important East End Jewish ILPer was Joseph Leftwich who had joined the ILP via the UDC, serving on the Executive Council of the former.[21] He also served as London editor of the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*.

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[15] Ibid.
[16] Kelemen, 'Labour Ideals and Colonial Pioneers', p. 30.
[17] Balfour to Rothschild, 2 November 1917, British Library Add. MS 41178 f. 3. Cited in James Tomes, *Balfour and Foreign Policy: The International Thought of a Conservative Statesman* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 198.
[18] Inter-Allied Labour and Socialist Conference, *Memorandum on War Aim Agreed Upon at the Central Hall Westminster, London on February 20th to 24th 1918* (London, 1918), p. 12.
[19] Ibid., p. 5.
[20] Kadish, *Bolsheviks and British Jews*, p. 235.
[21] Julia Bush, *Behind the Lines: East London Labour 1914-1919* (London, 1984), p. 177.

Significantly, Leftwich was secretary of *Poale Zion* when it affiliated to the Labour Party.[22] Furthermore, Labour's first Jewish MP, elected in 1922, was the 'Clydesider' Emmanuel Shinwell who had joined the ILP in 1903 and was an ILP-sponsored candidate.[23] Shinwell took relatively little interest in the question of Palestine, much to the disappointment of *Poale Zion* activists.[24] After meeting Shinwell, Labour Zionist Dov Hoz believed that Shinwell was unconcerned about Zionism as he represented a mining constituency.[25] Indeed, Shinwell promised to visit Palestine, but this did not materialise.[26]

Ramsay MacDonald: 'A Socialist in Palestine'

The most significant visit took place in February 1922, when MacDonald, who would become Labour Party leader later that year, and Labour's first prime minister and foreign secretary in 1924, travelled to Egypt, Palestine and Syria.[27] All of these countries, he found, were 'seething with an after-the-war unsettlement'.[28] MacDonald had first commented on Palestine in July 1917. At this point, although sympathetic to Zionism, he stated that he was 'still in the position of one who listens and learns rather than one whose mind is made up'.[29] However, when the Balfour Declaration was issued, he gave it his full backing.[30] Thus, he was already pro-Zionist prior to his visit. On his return from the Middle East and North Africa, MacDonald wrote a lengthy article in *Forward*, entitled 'New Wine in Old Bottles'. This title was a clear and deliberate reference to the New Testament, demonstrating that while it was not the chief reason for support for Zionism, religious ideas certainly shaped the perceptions and discourse of some British Labourites regarding the Zionist movement. In addition, he discussed his experiences in ILP's monthly journal *The Socialist Review*.[31] Although MacDonald clearly viewed Palestine within the context of colonial policy, he nevertheless emphasised the distinctive nature of the political situation there, believing that 'the problem takes a different and a very novel form'.[32] MacDonald characterised it as 'the conflict between the Middle Ages and the Twentieth Century'.[33] However, a key difference

[22] Kadish, *Bolsheviks and British Jews*, p. 235-236; Bush, *Behind the Lines*, p. 177.
[23] Kadish, Ibid., p. 236.
[24] Gorni, *British Labour Movement and Zionism,* p. 55.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] MacDonald Diary, 1922. Ramsay MacDonald Papers, John Rylands Library Manchester, RMD 2/19.
[28] Ramsay MacDonald, 'Old Wine in New Bottles', *Forward*, 22 March 1922.
[29] Quoted in Lewis Rifkind, *Zionism and Socialism* (London, 1918), p. 19.
[30] Ibid.
[31] MacDonald, 'Wanderings and Excursions', *Socialist Review*, April 1922.
[32] MacDonald, 'Old Wine in New Bottles', *Forward*, 22 March 1922.
[33] Ibid.

was that in this case it was 'caused by the immigration of people, and not only by the growth of ideas within a nation'.[34]

In his writings on Palestine, MacDonald elaborated on and applied his 'constructive' imperialist policy which he had originally set out in the 1907 document *Labour and the Empire*. He identified what he saw as the two 'great obstacles' within the administration of imperial rule. Firstly, there was 'the official who comes with a purely military mind to his task, who thinks of a British Empire of subject peoples being ruled by Englishmen'.[35] The second problem was 'the man of commercial interest who thinks that his store is the Empire, and that his profits must be made sure by British control exercised by British officials, soldiers and police'. In short, he reiterated his rejection of exploitative imperialism. MacDonald then proposed the remedy, setting out Labour's policy:

> We should regard ourselves as friends in the background, guarding against evil… beginning good things always with the co-operation of the people themselves … and guarding as much as possible against taking upon responsibility for a government that ought to become more and more self-government. British officials should be reduced to a minimum, and they should regard themselves mainly as advisors.[36]

Again, this tallied with his previous work in which the ideal imperial policy sought friendly relations with non-self-governing states and equal relations with dominion states. Despite identifying the obvious problem that two groups had been promised self-determination in the same territory, MacDonald was confident that an 'Arab-Jewish concordat' would be sufficient to bring about a solution. However, the precise terms of such an agreement were not stated. His experiences in the Middle East had only confirmed his previously-held ideas on colonial questions, commenting 'I am back more convinced than ever that if we had at home a Labour Government inspired by a Labour and Socialist intelligentsia, the rough places here would be made smooth, and the moral reputations of our country would shine anew in the world'.[37]

[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.

These articles were soon followed by *A Socialist in Palestine,* a pamphlet which was published by *Poale Zion* in 1922 and incorporated some of his previous material. In this work, MacDonald recognised that Palestinian Arab anti-Zionism was 'In its most elementary… form, the claim… for self-determination'.[38] However, on two occasions MacDonald emphasised that the Palestinian Arab claim to self-determination was deficient; stating that it was 'very incomplete' and lacked 'complete validity'.[39] The first reason for this was that Palestine could not be 'divested of its traditions, which 'remained vital political considerations', as for MacDonald, 'Palestine and the Jew' could 'never be separated'.[40] The second factor was that the Arab population 'do not and cannot use or develop the resources of Palestine'.[41] However, MacDonald emphatically rejected population transfer as a solution.[42] Instead, he maintained that Zionism would bring benefits to both Jews and Arabs. Although aware of cases where Zionist workers had demanded racially exclusive employment practices, he believed these were due solely to economic reasons, as Arab labour was being employed to undercut wages.[43] After meeting with the leaders of the Zionist labour movement in Palestine, he was satisfied that there was no trace of 'racial exclusiveness'.[44] Therefore, as in his previous articles, MacDonald maintained an optimistic view of the conflict, believing that 'a policy which, whilst keeping Palestine open to a Jewish ''return,'' not only protects an Arab in his rights but sees that he shares amply in the increased prosperity of the country, is certainly not doomed to failure'.[45]

While in Palestine, MacDonald emphasised that contrary to what its critics opined, Labour had a coherent foreign policy.[46] He argued that Labour was best placed to implement foreign policy. Indeed, MacDonald placed Palestine in a wider international context. At a 'Stop the War' meeting called by the ILP in September 1922, he told the audience that if Britain went to war with Turkey 'trouble would be caused in Egypt and Palestine and wherever Moslems were'.[47]

[38] Ramsay MacDonald, A *Socialist in Palestine* (London, 1922), p. 18.
[39] Ibid. See also Kelemen, 'Zionism and the Labour Party', p. 73.
[40] MacDonald, A *Socialist in Palestine,* p. 18.
[41] Ibid
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., p. 20.
[44] Ibid., p. 21.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] 'Stop the War: Labour Denounces the Premier', *The Times,* 21 September 1922.

The final section of the work consisted of an English translation of an interview MacDonald had given in to the official newspaper of the *Histradrut*. In this interview, he promised that on his return he would endeavour to promote Labour Zionism not just with his colleagues in both the Labour Party and the ILP, but also with the electorate.[48] And MacDonald did indeed attempt to present the case for Zionism to workers in Britain. In January 1923, he gave a lecture on Palestine in Cowdenbeath, a mining community in West Fife, Scotland. During this discussion, he reiterated his belief that 'rightly or wrongly' Britain had 'contracted obligations' in Palestine which had to be fulfilled.[49] Addressing the issue of British expenditure in Palestine, MacDonald argued that it was 'dishonest' to claim that excessive British military expenditure was being spent administering Palestine when in fact it was for the entire Middle Eastern region. Moreover, he believed that Palestine would soon be able to 'pay its own way' once Zionist development had been allowed to flourish.[50] Clearly, MacDonald intended to reach an audience beyond the labour movement as in addition to his various writings in the Labour press, he also wrote an article putting forward these arguments in favour of Zionism in the liberal publication the *Contemporary Review*.[51]

H. N. Brailsford and the *New Leader*

Throughout the interwar years and beyond, Brailsford was a leading advocate for the Zionist cause. However, his biographer, F. M. Leventhal has presented a misleading picture by attributing Brailsford's support for Zionism to his first-hand experiences of the situation there. Leventhal wrote that 'Ever since his visit to Palestine in 1930, he had championed Jewish settlement'.[52] Yet, this visit to Palestine took place in late 1930, whereas in January of that year, Brailsford had met with leading Labour Zionist activist Berl Katznelson, who described him as a 'true friend' of the Zionist movement and as someone who was 'convinced' of the 'justice' of the Zionist cause.[53] In fact, as Gorni has highlighted, Brailsford's first arguments in favour of Zionism were made in his book *A League of Nations*, published in February 1917, some months before the Balfour Declaration was issued.[54] Similarly, both Kelemen and Callaghan have noted that Brailsford, along with MacDonald and Lansbury were amongst the first British socialists to support Zionism, on the basis of the

[48] MacDonald, *Socialist in Palestine*, p. 22.
[49] 'Future of Palestine: Mr. Ramsay MacDonald Hopeful', *The Times*, 24 January 1923.
[50] Ibid.
[51] MacDonald, 'Zionism and Palestine', *Contemporary Review*, CXXI, April 1922.
[52] F. M. Leventhal, *The Last Dissenter: H.N. Brailsford and His World* (Oxford, 1985), p. 285.
[53] Gorni, *British Labour Movement and Zionism*, p. 19.
[54] Ibid., p. 24. Note 25.

Wilsonian concept of self-determination for ethnic groups.[55] As the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* noted when Brailsford gave a series of lectures on international affairs for the 'New School for Social Research' in New York in January 1931, he had been 'known for many years' as 'one of the most outspoken of the non-Jewish Zionist sympathisers'.[56] Indeed, Brailsford himself commented that his visit to Palestine had merely confirmed his previously held ideas, 'I had pretty closely understood the situation. Of course, I gained much from the visit; the details of the pictures were filled in. But the main lines had been right'.[57] Brailsford's political thought provides an instructive example of why it is an over-simplification to equate pro-Zionism with philo-Semitism and anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism, as he has been accused of adopting what Stephen Howe has termed a 'markedly anti-Semitic tone' when opposing the Boer War, yet was a committed champion of Zionism.[58]

In his early writings on Zionism, Brailsford made clear that it was desirable to create in Palestine 'an autonomous province with a Jewish Administration under an international guarantee'.[59] However, Brailsford believed that this task was of secondary concern compared with establishing equal rights for Jews in Europe, maintaining that it was 'incomparably more important in the interest of the Jews to secure a general charter of equal rights for them, than to promote their settlement in the Holy Land'.[60] Nevertheless, he believed that the two issues were not mutually exclusive. Brailsford argued that 'any thought of turning Palestine into a British dependency' must be resisted. Instead, Palestine should be administered by the League of Nations. The League would 'name a Commission to promote Jewish immigration and to watch the interests of the settlers'. Regarding the Palestinian Arabs, Brailsford recognised that 'As yet, however, it must not be forgotten that the Jews are not the majority in Palestine'. However, he mentioned this not because he thought that any native Palestinian Arab objections to this plan should be considered, but rather because it posed a problem in the immediate term to establishing a Jewish state. Therefore, the League's backing was vital as the 'objections of the Turks to this and other infringements of their sovereignty would

[55] Callaghan, *The Labour Party and Foreign Policy*, p. 295. Note 18; Kelemen, 'Zionism and the Labour Party', p. 73.
[56] 'Brailsford Urges Transfer of Palestine Administration to British Foreign Office' *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 16 January 1931.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Howe, *Anti-Colonialism in British Politics*, p. 38.
[59] H. N. Brailsford, *A League of Nations* (London, 1917), p. 327.
[60] Ibid., p. 172.

yield readily to united pressure' and the League could provide the necessary 'financial compensations'.[61]

Accordingly, throughout the 1920s, the official line of the *New Leader*, a paper which commanded admiration from the socialist movement nationally and internationally, was supportive of Zionism. As editor since its inception in 1922, Brailsford penned many pro-Zionist articles and editorial comments. In these pieces, Brailsford outlined in detail the basis of his support for Zionism. He emphasised that the Zionists were not dispossessing any of the native population. This was because the Zionists were entering Palestine in limited numbers and their colonies were being established 'in waste and neglected areas of an under-populated country'.[62] Brailsford argued that Zionism was beneficial for the native population as new industries and new technologies brought 'wealth and progress to a backward country, whose present population lacks the science and the enterprise to do these things for itself'.[63] There was also a labour dimension, as he believed that the 'Socialist immigrants' were 'helping the Arabs workers to organise and improve their lot'. Thus, Brailsford wrote, 'Zionism, in short, means gain to Palestine in culture as in wealth'.[64] Furthermore, under his editorship, the paper ran several pro-Zionist articles from various commentators. For instance, Daisy Adler contributed a sympathetic piece entitled 'Practical Socialism in Palestine'.[65] In addition, *Poale Zion* activists such as Moshe Shertok were given a platform to praise the 'Socialist Idealism' of the 'Kevutza' (kibbutz) system.[66]

A further pro-Zionist article came from Brailsford's longstanding friend, the campaigning journalist Henry W. Nevinson. In the post-war years he joined the Labour Party, and had declined an approach to stand as a parliamentary candidate.[67] Although he never formally joined the ILP, by virtue of his connection with Brailsford, he was a regular contributor to the *New Leader*.[68] In 1926, the World Zionist Organisation asked Nevinson to publicise in Britain the Zionist development in Palestine and paid his expenses for a six-week trip to

[61] Ibid., p. 173.
[62] H. N. Brailsford, 'Journey to Damascus', *New Leader*, 17 April 1925.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Daisy Adler, 'Practical Socialism in Palestine', *New Leader*, 17 April 1925.
[66] Moshe Shertok, 'Correspondence: 'Socialism in Palestine', *New Leader*, 15 May 1925. Shertok, later known as 'Sharratt' was at this time a student at the LSE. He later became the prime minister of Israel from 1953-1955.
[67] Angela V. John, *War, Journalism and Shaping the Twentieth Century: The Life and Times of Henry W. Nevinson* (London, 2006), p. 191.
[68] Henry W. Nevinson, *Last Changes, Last Chances* (London, 1928), p. 303.

Palestine in September of that year.[69] On his return, Nevinson published a number of articles in various British and American publications, as well giving a lecture on Palestine for the UDC. In the *New Leader* Nevinson contributed an article entitled, 'The Zionists Go Back To Their Home: A Great Movement'. This emphasised the progressive nature of Zionism. In short, it was 'a hopeful movement - a movement that looks forward'.[70] Nevinson's arguments were an example of the influence of Christian ideas in pro-Zionist thought.[71] Because of his Evangelical Christian upbringing, he wrote, 'To go to Palestine is to me like a return to a traditional home'.[72] Consequently, he entirely accepted the rationale of Zionism on the grounds that given his own emotional attachment to Palestine; he imagined that the Jewish identification with 'their Holy Land' would be even more intense.[73] In key aspects, Nevinson's analysis tallied with that of MacDonald. Nevinson believed that 'the objection of the Palestinian Arabs' to Zionism was 'easily understood', because this was 'The meeting of European immigrant Jews with Arabs means the clash of two civilizations – or of two ages in history'.[74]

For Nevinson, the Palestinian Arabs had benefited as both British administration of the Mandate and Zionism had brought about numerous improvements. These included a more rigorous judiciary, better infrastructures such as roads, water supply, sanitation, the eradication of diseases such as malaria and the end of Ottoman military conscription. Nevinson's understanding of the Zionist movement was that it had no designs to transform Palestine into a Jewish state. Rather, its objective was merely 'to create a national home for Jews in Palestine, not to convert Palestine into a Jewish country, as the Arabs feared, and as certain English officials and clergy still pretend to believe'.[75] It is interesting to note that when outlining the various forms of opposition to Zionism, he omitted to mention left-wing anti-Zionism. It is also striking that, despite meeting leading Labour Zionist David Ben-Gurion, in Nevinson's piece in the *New Leader*, Labour Zionism did not feature at all prominently.

[69] John, *Life and Times of Henry W. Nevinson*, pp. 192-193.
[70] Nevinson, 'Zionists Go Back to Their Home: A Great Movement' *New Leader*, 4 March 1927.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Nevinson, *In the Dark Backward* (London, 1934), p. 71.
[73] Nevinson, 'Zionists Go Back to Their Home', *New Leader*, 4 March 1927.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.

However, some opposition did emerge in the form of letters from readers of the party's paper. For example, in April 1925, one correspondent, writing under the name 'Haifa', argued that Brailsford's claim that Zionist immigration did not dispossess the Arabs was 'obviously absurd'. Zionist settlements were not growing up on waste lands as 'there is practically no cultivable land in Palestine which is not already cultivated'.[76] In contrast to the view expressed by MacDonald and Brailsford, the 'Moslem and Christian Arabs of Palestine' were not 'primitive' but rather were a 'clever and industrious race' which had produced 'skilled craftsmen', 'successful agriculturalists' and 'excellent road-makers'. Significantly, the contributor went on to argue that 'The people of Palestine have been deprived of every shred of political liberty, of local self-government [and] of belief in the sincerity of the I.L.P'.[77] Brailsford's response was to reiterate his belief that Zionist colonies were not dispossessing natives as they had been 'built up on land which they [the Zionists] have irrigated'. Moreover, he insisted that although 'the Arabs may be a clever race', the Jewish immigrants were still more advanced as they had established 'botanical laboratories' in order to find crops which were suited to the climate in Palestine and were using electricity in agriculture. This was responded to again by 'Haifa', who quoted the Anglo-French Declaration of 7 November 1918 in support of the Arab claim for self-determination. The correspondent was clearly unconvinced and answered Brailsford in a dismissive tone:

> 'You appear to suggest… that because immigrant Jews may have secured a botanical laboratory… we are entitled to deny to the people of Palestine the ''national government and administration deriving their authority from the initiative and free choice of the indigenous population'' which we promised them, and which in any case, is their due. Is this the sort of teaching for which our I.L.P. stands to-day? [78]

Brailsford responded by maintaining that the ILP had always been opposed to the British mandate for Palestine. Moreover, he conceded that 'the British strategical interest in the Suez Canal had vitiated the whole idea of Zionism'.[79] However, Brailsford attributed the lack of Arab political representation not to British misrule, but to the decision of Palestinian Arabs to boycott the Legislative Council.[80]

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[76] Letters to the Editor: 'Jews and Arabs in Palestine', *New Leader,* 24 April 1925.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Letters to the Editor: 'Jews and Arabs in Palestine', *New Leader*, 1 May 1925.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.

Any voices which could be construed as being critical of British policy in Palestine were quickly responded to by Zionist activists. For instance, in December 1922, an article in the paper questioned the presence of the 'Black and Tans' in Palestine. The columnist 'Scissors' believed that they were 'waiting for trouble' and that this 'seemed likely to come'.[81] A recent report by the *Daily Express* was quoted which had commented that 'British popularity has declined into positive hate, and belief in British policies has faded'. Moreover, the point was made that the Black and Tans were 'expensive and we pay for them!'[82] In the next edition of the paper, Israel Cohen, General Secretary of the Zionist Organisation, responded in a critical manner. In his letter, Cohen reminded the ILP that maintaining the mandate was official Labour Party policy: 'As the Labour Party has officially approved of the policy of the British mandate for Palestine, it is strange that you should appear to lend assistance to those who are bitterly opposing that policy'.[83] In the editorial notes, Brailsford assured Cohen that the ILP did indeed back the Zionist claim, pointing out that during the general election of 1922, the *New Leader* had reminded the Labour Party that 'the promise to the Jews in Palestine must be kept'. However, Brailsford stood by the paper's characterisation of the 'Black and Tans', but only out of concern for Zionism, noting 'we shall be surprised if Jewish interests are served by police trained in the school of the Irish Black and Tans'.[84] It might seem contradictory that Brailsford accepted that Zionism was backed by British imperialism and was opposed to Britain having taken on the mandate, yet supported the goal of the Zionist movement. However, this was because Brailsford believed that the proper solution was the internationalisation of control over Palestine and the promotion of Zionist aims within that framework.[85]

Cohen also dismissed the economic argument against Britain's administration of Palestine by stating that military expenditure there amounted to 'less than one quarter percent of the British Budget'.[86] This economic argument against Zionism was a feature of anti-Zionist thought within British labour movement. For example, in April 1923, The *Blaydon Courier*

[81] 'The World We Live In: Black and Tans', *New Leader*, 15 December 1922.
[82] Ibid.
[83] 'Labour and Palestine', *New Leader*, 29 December 1922.
[84] Ibid.
[85] See for example H.N. Brailsford, *Olives of Endless Age* (London, 1928), p. 331.
[86] Ibid.

carried a report of John Joseph Jones, Labour MP for Silvertown speaking in County Durham:

> Mr Jones referred to the question of unemployment and said that the same people who could find money for 'flommery' (sic.) and in making Palestine a land fit for the Hebrews to live in – (laughter) – told them that the they could not find the means whereby to make England a decent place to live in.[87]

It should be noted that while the report indicates that these comments, a reference to Lloyd George's promise of a 'land fit for heroes', were made in jest, Jones' remarks nevertheless reveal that neither he nor his audience recognised a working-class dimension to the Zionist project and saw it as an endeavour which was diverting funds away from important domestic issues.

Although Brailsford's standing in the party diminished after his removal as editor of the *New Leader* in October 1926, he remained in the ILP until it disaffiliated from the Labour Party in 1932.[88] Even after he had been replaced by Brockway as editor of the *New Leader*, Brailsford continued to be a prominent contributor regarding international questions and the paper's only writer on Palestine. Outside the paper, in his 1928 work *Olives of Endless Age* Brailsford reaffirmed his belief that there was a 'strong case' for Zionism.[89] Furthermore, under Brockway's editorship, the *New Leader* continued to provide a platform for pro-Zionist views and Brockway himself was certainly supportive of Labour Zionism.[90] For instance, in April 1928, Harry Snell wrote an article which endorsed Wedgwood's study on Palestine, *The Seventh Dominion*.[91] In this text, Wedgwood proposed that Palestine should become fully incorporated into the British Empire and in February 1929, established 'The Seventh Dominion League' which campaigned for this objective. The League made no secret of its sympathy with imperialist aims and emphasised the strategic importance of Palestine for British imperialism: 'The Suez means more to the British Empire than any other great empire'. Therefore, it was 'most vital in British interests' for the Suez to be 'protected from

[87] *Blaydon Courier*, 28 April 1923. 'Flommery' is presumably 'flummery', a term which means 'nonsense'. OED.
[88] Leventhal, *The Last Dissenter*, p. 225.
[89] H.N. Brailsford, *Olives of Endless Age: Being A View of This Distracted World and the Possibility of International Unity* (London, 1928), p. 331.
[90] 'Meeting of Poale-Zionists', *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 June 1923.
[91] Harry Snell, 'Palestine & The Jews', *New Leader*, 6 April 1928.

the dangers of hostile control'.[92] According to Snell's review, Wedgwood's book was 'full of fact and argument', which provided a 'real introduction' to the situation in Palestine and contained 'constructive proposals'.[93]

Labour in Government: 1929-1931

The second Labour government which came to power in June 1929 was soon forced to give serious attention to Palestine by the emergence of the Palestinian Arab revolt, which began in late August 1929. Reaction to these events demonstrated the disparity of opinion within the ILP. In early September 1929, the LAI, in which the ILP leadership was still officially involved, issued a manifesto which set out clearly its policy on Palestine. The statement argued that the revolt of the Arabs against the Zionists was 'in reality a revolt against the economic and political serfdom to which they have been reduced by British Imperialism in Palestine'.[94] The Zionists in Palestine were deemed to be 'lackeys of Imperialism' and in this 'function' had 'received the whole-hearted support of the Social Democratic Parties of the Second International and most especially of members of the British Labour Party'.[95] The leaders of the mainstream Jewish labour movement in Palestine were also blamed for having 'systematically played upon the racial sentiment' of Jewish workers and 'used them as tools of British Imperialistic policy'. Thus, the Zionist movement and European social democrats were 'the most bitter enemies of the Arab national revolutionary movement'. The activities of these two groups had prevented the 'united front' of Arab and Jewish workers which was necessary to defeat British imperialism. Furthermore, referring to the activities of Wedgwood's Seventh Dominion League, the Zionists and social democrats were accused of demanding the 'conversion' of the British mandate for Palestine 'into open and flagrant annexation to the British Empire'. The manifesto concluded with slogans which summarised the LAI's position:

> Down with British Imperialistic exploitation in Palestine! Long live the united revolutionary struggle of the Jewish and Arab workers and peasants! Down with Zionism! Long live the federation of independent Arabian countries! [96]

[92] 'England Needs Palestine For Vital Corridor Control 7th Dominion League Says', *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 22 February 1929.
[93] Ibid.
[94] 'League Against Imperialism: Zionists Denounced', *The Times*, 10 September 1929.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid.

The LAI made a deliberate effort to win over the Anglo-Jewish community to this analysis. The organisation's records show that this manifesto was printed in English and Yiddish for distribution in East London and other (unspecified) areas where the LAI believed there was 'a considerable Jewish population'.[97] After the Labour government sent troops into Palestine, the secretary of the British section of the LAI and ILPer, Bridgeman, condemned both the Labour government and the Zionist movement in strong terms, even presenting Zionism as a form of fascism. The ILP newspaper *Forward* quoted an article by Bridgeman in the *Daily Worker* as stating:

> It is the policy of the Labour Government to support this Zionist Fascism, which is one of the instruments of Imperialism in the Near East. The speed with which troops, warships, aeroplanes were rushed to the scene is proof that the zeal of the MacDonald government is even greater than that of Baldwin.[98]

Later that month, on 17 September 1929, Maxton was expelled from the LAI by the Executive Committee of the British Section for his 'refusal to carry out the League's work according to the decisions of the executive committee'.[99] The conflict arose when the London District Committee of the LAI passed a resolution which stated, 'Since the Frankfurt Congress, the ILP through the *New Leader* has supported the Labour Government's imperialist policy in Egypt, and has come out in favour of the crushing of the Arab revolt in Palestine'.[100] This was a reference to Brailsford's article in the *New Leader* on 30 August, 1929 in which Brailsford supported the Labour government's policy.[101]

The Executive Committee of the British Section of the LAI demanded that Maxton immediately publish in the *New Leader* his statement made at Frankfurt and in addition, explicitly express his opposition to Government policy in Egypt and Palestine. But Maxton refused, saying that while he stood by what he had said, he would not be 'bullied, harassed or

[97] *Report of the National Conference of the League Against Imperialism (British Section)*, (London, 1931), p. 10.
[98] 'The Left and the Coms', *Forward*, 7 September 1929.
[99] *Report of the National Conference of the League Against Imperialism (British Section),* p. 10.
[100] Ibid., p. 9.
[101] H.N. Brailsford, 'Blood on the Wailing Wall', *New Leader*, 30 August 1929.

pestered' as to his methods.[102] Therefore, the LAI concluded that Maxton had 'made no attempts publicly to fight [Labour's] imperialist policy or carry out his pledges' which he had made at the Second World Congress in Frankfurt and moved to expel him.[103] In his memoirs, Brockway dismissed the reasons given for Maxton's expulsion as a 'small excuse'.[104] However, such views as those expressed by Brailsford were clearly anathema to the LAI. It should be recognised that, taken at face-value, the claims cited by the LAI were reasonable. After all, the *New Leader* was, in the words of the party, the 'official organ of the ILP' in which Maxton had his own weekly column. However, Maxton did not use this platform to offer any kind of alternative analysis on Palestine to that of Brailsford.

Furthermore, although this was not cited by the LAI, it should be noted that on 1 September 1929 Maxton spoke at a mass demonstration at the Albert Hall called by the English Zionist Federation.[105] The meeting, chaired by Alfred Mond was addressed by Weizmann. Wedgwood and Maxton were reportedly 'the only well-known non-Jews on the platform'. At the end of the meeting a resolution was passed which expressed 'the determination of the Jewish race to continue, undeterred by persecution, and with unshaken determination to build the Jewish National Home'.[106] This evidence appears to present a more nuanced version of the reasons behind Maxton's expulsion, rather than it simply being the result of Communist Party sectarianism. Furthermore, it demonstrated that despite having entirely different perspectives on empire and indeed Zionism, Wedgwood and Maxton could unite in these circumstances. The explanation appears to be that while Wedgwood was there to show his support for Zionism, Maxton's presence is better explained as a show of solidarity with the grieving Anglo-Jewish community.

In October 1929, Maxton openly reaffirmed his opposition to Zionism at a meeting of socialists in Berne, Switzerland. He told the audience that Palestine was 'not suitable' for the Jewish National Home and that 'the Arabs should be given control of Palestine'.[107] Therefore, it appears that while Maxton did not share the view that the outbreak of violence

[102] *Report of the National Conference of the League Against Imperialism*, p. 10.
[103] Ibid., p. 9.
[104] Brockway, *Inside the Left*, p. 168.
[105] 'Religious World: Jewry Prays For Its Dead, Morning and Protest at the Albert Hall', *Auckland Star*, 23 November 1929.
[106] Ibid.
[107] 'Mr J. Maxton Support the Arabs', *Jewish Chronicle*, 19 October 1929.

was legitimate, he nevertheless maintained the view that Palestinian Arab demands for impendence were.

Palestine revealed that it was not just the former Liberals or 'constructivist imperialists' within the ILP who did not subscribe to an anti-colonial perspective. ILP MP for Maryhill, Glasgow John S. Clarke wrote an article which supported the dispatching of troops to Palestine. Clarke, a 'Clydesider', had a radical pedigree, having attended the Communist International in 1920 as a delegate of the Clyde Workers' Committee.[108] Therefore, although Clarke may have been aligned with Maxton in other respects, his analysis was certainly not anti-colonial. Much of the article consisted of a history of Arab and Jews and differed from Brailsford's analysis in the sense that it expressed positive views about both Jewish and Arab civilisations. He believed that Zionism was fundamentally an unattractive prospect for the vast majority of the Jewish community in Europe:

> To get a proper perspective today we must distinguish between the Jew of Palestine (except the few western Jews who have settled there) from the typical western Jew of civilisation. The latter is a Jew by inheritance. In all other respects he is like the people among whom he lives. Not one in ten thousand would dream of abandoning the twentieth century to go back to Palestine and live the life of the Old Testament.[109]

The article defended the Labour government's policy as an unfortunate but necessary step. 'That ''peace'' is ensured by somewhat doubtful means is beside the mark… so Peace [sic] frequently wears a threatening aspect, more's the pity'.[110] Clarke's interpretation of events in Palestine informed his opposition to the idea of decolonisation elsewhere in the British Empire. For instance, writing about India in January 1930 he stated, 'I remember what happened in Jerusalem recently between the devotees of only two mutually antagonistic faiths, when no white man's army was present. God knows what would happen in a land where half a thousand mutually antagonistic faiths exist'.[111] Therefore, although he was 'no believer in Capitalist Imperialism because I hate Capitalism,' he maintained the position that '… if the presence of the British is an evil, which I grant that it is in the ultimate, a far worse evil would follow their withdrawal'. Therefore, Clarke's entire analysis on the question of

[108] Raymond Challinor, *John S. Clarke: Parliamentarian, Poet and Lion-Tamer* (London, 1977), p. 58
[109] John S. Clarke, 'Clash of Creed and Lure of Loot', *Forward,* 7 September 1929.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Clarke, 'Lo the Poor Indian: No Easy Solution to His Problems', *Forward*, 18 January 1930.

colonialism differed considerably from that pursued by Maxton and Brockway in the LAI. According to Clarke, 'Smashing the Empire merely to kill Capitalism will not bring Socialism, but the same kind of horror and anarchy which followed the downfall of Rome when barbarians from without o'erwhelemed (sic.) it, let us, in discussing India, preserve our sanity'.[112] This was a view shared by Thomas Johnston MP, the editor of *Forward* and a leading proponent of 'Empire Socialism' who complained that in the 1920s that 'the farther left you fellow-travelled in politics the more apparently you were persuaded that the best thing to do with the Empire was to bust it up'.[113]

Regarding Palestine, Clarke rejected the Zionist idea on account of his hostility towards nationalism as a concept, writing that 'the Jew who brags about his Nationalism is as big a fool as the Scot who brags about his'. However, he did not offer any kind of practical solution to the situation in Palestine but rather hoped that with a radical economic reorganisation of society, nationalist and interreligious conflicts would be transcended.

> Some day [sic.] a higher and nobler civilisation than has ever been will arise in which neither frontier, race nor religion will be matters of much concern. When private ownership, which breeds both racial and inter-racial antagonisms, will have been banished forever, and when men, if they do still hold to a religion, will be content to regard all mankind as the children of the one creator. They will glorify him not by each crowing puerile challenges from the top of his Nationalist midden-heap until mutual slaughter results, but by deeds of generosity calculated to elevate all humanity.[114]

Therefore, while Gorni was correct to describe this as an 'anti-Zionist' article, it should be emphasised that it was equally dismissive of Arab nationalism and backed the British government using military force to subdue the Arab nationalist movement in Palestine.[115]

However, for some ILP activists, the government's actions were in absolute opposition to the anti-imperialist ideals of the labour movement and it was unacceptable for the ILP to express any kind of support for the government's colonial policy. Writing to the *New Leader,* Joseph

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[112] Ibid.
[113] Thomas Johnston, *Memories* (London, 1952), p. 49. Also see Howe, *Anti-Colonialism and British Politics*, pp. 49-50; Graham Walker, *Thomas Johnson* (Manchester 1988), pp. 66-69.
[114] Clarke, 'Clash of Creed', *Forward*, 7 September 1929.
[115] Gorni, *British Labour Movement and Zionism*, p. 63.

Southall of Birmingham ILP believed that the Labour government was pursuing a 'policy of Imperialism or continuity'.[116] This policy was 'not merely negative to Socialism but in active opposition to it'. Thus, there was 'Imperialism in India, in Egypt, in Palestine in China, and everywhere else'. This clearly fed into the debate regarding disaffiliation, as according to Southall's letter, the official Labour Party was now an 'impenetrable oligarchy' from which the ILP must 'separate ourselves forthwith'. [117] At the ILP annual conference in Scarborough in 1931, Southall again stated that 'There was imperialism in India, in Egypt and Palestine. The ILP must be on one side or the other'.[118]

In December 1929, Brailsford shifted his position. He now believed that a limit should be set on Jewish immigration to ensure that it did not exceed 45 percent of the population of Palestine.[119] First and foremost, Brailsford believed this would have the effect of eliminating the fear 'which haunts the Arab mind today that he is destined to be overwhelmed by alien thousands'.[120] Secondly, he did not believe this proposal would be damaging to the Zionist movement as 'little of anything would be sacrificed' because 'the chances of exceeding such a figure during the probable duration of the Mandate are remote'. Brailsford estimated that at the present rate, it would take 'one hundred and sixty years' for the Jewish community to form a majority in Palestine. Therefore, he called on the Zionist movement to be realistic and take British public opinion into account. Brailsford believed that Zionists must 'coldly face the fact that... an immense change has come about in the attitude of the whole nation towards territorial expansion overseas'. Therefore, given this 'changing attitude toward imperialism' Britain could not continue indefinitely with the Palestine mandate.[121] His writings at this time led contemporary observers to believe that he had explicitly ruled out population transfer as an 'indefensible procedure'.[122]

On 20 October 1930, Colonial Secretary Lord Passfield issued the White Paper on Palestine. Four days later, the editorial line of the *New Leader* backed the Labour government and thus, for the first time, articulated an unambiguously anti-Zionist line. It declared, 'However

[116] Letters: 'Labour Imperialism' *New Leader*, 5 September 1930.
[117] Ibid.
[118] ILP *Annual Report* (London, 1931), p. 93.
[119] 'Says Limit Jewish Palestine Influx to Half of Population to Calm Arab Fears of Encroachment', *JTA*, 9 December 1929; H.N. Brailsford, 'Great Britain and the Palestinian Mandate', *Menorah Journal* XVII, No. 3, December 1929.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Charles H. Joseph, 'Editorial: Brailsford on Palestine', *The Jewish Criterion*, 13 December 1929.

sympathetic one may be to Jewish aspirations, it is difficult to see how the Government could refrain from interfering if it were to discharge its responsibilities to the Arab population'.[123] The editorial quoted the White Paper which discussed the increase in the Jewish population in Palestine. The conclusion was drawn that Zionist immigration was indeed dispossessing the native Arab Palestinians and that the Zionist movement was seeking to subjugate the Arabs: 'Clearly if this process had been allowed to continue unchecked, in a comparatively short time the Arabs would have been wholly a landless proletariat in permanent subjection to the Jewish colonists'.[124]

Writing in the *New Leader*, Brailsford responded forcefully to this new line by penning a series of pro-Zionist articles. Passfield's proposals 'incredibly tactless'.[125] The dominance of Brailsford in relation to the ILP's Palestine policy was clearly demonstrated in Brockway's memoirs. Brockway was keenly interested in a range of international and colonial issues.[126] However, he recalled that during his visit to the USA in January 1930, a debate on Palestine at the Foreign Policy Association, came as 'a surprise'.[127] When asked to speak on this issue, Brockway protested: 'I know nothing about Palestine'.[128] Such a remark about India or China would have been unthinkable. When one of the organisers of Brockway's tour Mary Fox, secretary of the League for Industrial Democracy, commented that the organisation's official literature had often carried reports of Brockway's contributions on Palestine in parliament, Brockway explained:

> My questions had been efforts to save both Arabs and Jews from execution: I realised that hanging, whether on one side or the other, would only make any solution more difficult, but what the solution was I had no idea! [129]

Brockway's deliberations on Palestine are very revealing in articulating the dilemma that Palestine presented for many in the labour movement. In his first memoir, he recalled:

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[123] 'What We Think: Jews and Arabs', *New Leader*, 24 October 1930.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Brailsford, 'Can Jews and Arabs Live Together?', *The New Leader*, 2 January 1931.
[126] See for example Brockway, *India and its Government* (London, 1921).
[127] In his memoirs, Brockway mistakenly recollected this debate taking place in 1932, see *Inside the Left*, p. 235. However, as shown by contemporary press reports, it took place in January 1930. 'Sees Zionist Aims Imperilling Peace', *The New York Times*, 19 January 1930. In the same month, he also spoke about Palestine at a discussion held in Detroit under the auspices of the Women's League for Peace and Freedom, see 'Discuss Palestine', *The Border Cities Star*, 29 January 1930.
[128] Brockway, *Inside the Left*, p. 235.
[129] Ibid.

> One of the most difficult questions was Palestine. To most problems one can apply general principles, but to Palestine – no. By no other question have I been so puzzled: on no other question have I so allowed facts and influences to surround me, examining them quietly, weighing and estimating them before reaching a conclusion. I found nearly everyone divided into opposite camps.[130]

Brockway claimed that the line which he had developed for this debate was to form the basis of the ILP's policy thereafter, namely that 'Palestine must become an Arab-Jewish State freed from British Imperialism'.[131] However, according to a contemporary report of the debate in *The New York Times*, Brockway based his solution to the situation in Palestine upon Jews and Arabs realising the 'full meaning of the Balfour Declaration', which for Brockway meant establishing a Jewish National Home without infringing upon the rights of the Palestinian Arabs.[132] He advocated the setting up of a 'round table conference under an impartial chairman'. This round table would then create a legislative assembly 'in which Jews and Arabs would have proportionate representation'. There should also be a conference of Jewish, Muslim and Christian leaders which would deal with the problems surrounding the holy sites in Palestine. In the immediate term, he reiterated his call for the 'cancellation of the death penalties' for both Jews and Arabs implicated in the riots of August 1929 as it would 'create better feeling on both sides'.[133] Therefore, at this time, it appears that Brockway had no explicit ideological objection to the Zionist goal of establishing Jewish National Home. However, he must have been aware of the implication of this policy, namely that a system of proportional representation would almost certainly have resulted in the Arab majority blocking any attempt to establish a Jewish state. Secondly, the processes by which the end of British imperialism was to be achieved, seemingly in gradual steps by a constitutional assembly organised on a communal (rather than a class) basis was at odds with the policy which was to follow.

It was later that Brockway first expressed his unequivocal opposition to the Balfour Declaration. When interviewed in September 1931, he was stated that he was 'opposed to it in the form in which it was issued', because it provided 'an opportunity for ambiguous

[130] Ibid., pp. 291-293.
[131] Ibid., p. 235.
[132] 'Sees Zionist Aims Imperilling Peace', *The New York Times*, 19 January 1930.
[133] Ibid.

interpretations'. More fundamentally however, Brockway thought that it was 'issued with a view to winning the support of Jewish capitalism' and thus 'that in itself is a sufficient reason why we should oppose it'.[134] Speaking on behalf of the ILP, Brockway revealingly declared 'The Palestine problem interests us only in as much as it affects British Imperialist policy, but as a specifically Jewish question Palestine does not interest us at all'.[135] Placing Palestine in the colonial context, Brockway claimed that the ILP had 'never been satisfied… with the policy which the Labour Government has been conducting in Palestine, just in the same way as we have not been satisfied with its policy in India, and we have been in open conflict with our Ministers on this question'.[136] However, this account appears difficult to reconcile with Brailsford's numerous pro-Zionist, pro-mandate articles which dominated the *New Leader* in the aftermath and the fact that the ILP championed Indian nationalism but not Palestinian Arab nationalism.

'A Socialist Policy for Palestine': 1932-1939

Notwithstanding Brockway's contributions, in the aftermath of Passfield's White Paper and its subsequent retraction in the form of MacDonald's letter to Chaim Weizmann, the ILP as a party did not formulate any kind of detailed policy on Palestine. However, one telling response was the promotion of immigration to the Jewish colony of Birobidzhan, a territory of 14,000 square miles in the Soviet Union, bordering Manchuria.[137] This project, which officially began in 1928, was an attempt to create an autonomous Jewish region away from Palestine and as such, served as a clear rival to Zionism.[138] The Soviet government announced that in Birobidzhan, Jews would possess their own administrative, education and judicial institutions, with Yiddish as the official language.[139] Under Brockway's editorship, the *New Leader* was very enthusiastic about the project and evidently perceived it more favourably than Zionism. An article discussing fascist persecution of Jews, concluded by referring to the existence of 'one striking contrast':

[134] 'Palestine Does Not Interest Us As Specifically Jewish Question', *JTA*, 3 September 1931.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Nora Levin, *The Jews in the Soviet Union since 1917: Paradox of Survival Volume 1* (New York, 1988), p. 283.
[138] Ibid., p. 291.
[139] Henry Felix Srebrnik, *Jerusalem on the Amur: Birobidzhan and the Canadian Jewish Communist Movement* (Montreal, 2008), p. 15.

> No we are not referring to Palestine! Despite all the talk of Britain providing a 'national home', the Jews in Palestine thought it necessary to declare a general strike last week against the British administration. The great contrast is in Soviet Russia, where the free Jewish colony of BiroBjan [sic.] has now been recognised as an autonomous territory.[140]

When the colony was officially declared as the 'Jewish Autonomous Region' in 1934, Brockway spoke at a celebratory meeting in East London. In his speech, he remarked that the causes of 'workers' freedom and Jewish freedom' were 'linked together' and called upon British Jews and British workers to unite in order to resist fascism which 'threaten(ed) both with slavery'.[141] In late August, the *New Leader* carried an article drawing attention to the scheme, alongside an advert for a fundraising event at Golders Green in East London.[142] This was not the first time Brockway had taken an interest in the plight of Soviet Jewry. In his capacity as ILP political secretary, Brockway had lent his support to a campaign to aid Jews who had been 'declassed' by the Soviet regime.[143] The 'People's Tool Campaign', which also gained support from the likes of Einstein, Blum and Bernstein, sought to support Jews who had been 'forced from their mercantile occupations by the new…economic system'.[144]

It was not until 1936, after the Palestinian Arab revolt had begun in late April, that the ILP started to give serious consideration to the situation in Palestine. In June, a document entitled 'The View of the ILP', authored by Brockway, was submitted to a discussion held by the International Bureau of Revolutionary Socialist Unity (IBRSU), entitled 'A Symposium on Palestine'. This text set out a series of points which outlined the key features of the party's political analysis. The first of these reaffirmed the long-held belief that the decision of the British government to establish a 'National Jewish Home in Palestine' was made 'for War and Imperialist purposes'.[145] Specifically, the report claimed, it was made for two reasons, firstly 'to secure the support of Jewish populations and particularly Jewish finance during the War,' and secondly, 'to provide an excuse for a British mandate over Palestine after the War'. British imperialism it argued, was interested in Palestine for three reasons. First, in order 'to

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[140] 'Fascist Lies About the Jews', *New Leader*, 8 June 1934.
[141] Ibid.
[142] 'Jewish Colonisation in Russia', *New Leader*, 31 August 1934.
[143] 'Plan Aid for Jews Declassed in Russia', *New York Times*, 5 April 1931; For more on how being 'declassed' affected Soviet Jewry see Nora Levin, *The Jews in the Soviet Union since 1917: Paradox of Survival Volume 1*(New York, 1988), pp. 153-167.
[144] 'Plan Aid for Jews Declassed in Russia', *New York Times*, 5 April 1931.
[145] 'The View of the ILP: Symposium on Palestine', *Revolutionary Socialist Bulletin New Series, No.4*, June 1936, pp. 15-16.

protect the route to India', second, 'to control the Eastern Mediterranean', and thirdly, 'to guard the oil of Mosul which flows through a pipe-line to Haifa'. According to the report, Zionism was an instrument of British imperialism in the sense that the British government had 'deliberately used the Jewish population in Palestine to weaken any Arab revolt against imperialism in the Near East and to destroy the movement for Arabian Independence'. However, at the same time, Jewish migration to Palestine had 'raised the standard of life' and socialist Jewish workers had introduced trade unionism, the cooperative movement and socialist ideas.[146]

The report demonstrated that the ILP did not see Labour Zionism as a homogenous entity and sought to distinguish between the right and left of the movement. The right wing was criticised as being 'intensely nationalist', whereas the left wing had 'advocated Jewish-Arab working-class unity and has sought to bring the Arabs into trade unions and to influence them with Socialist ideas'.[147]

This was followed by an analysis of the Arab nationalist movement, which was deemed to be not only devoid of a labour dimension but was profoundly anti-socialist. Arab nationalism was 'dominated by aristocratic Effendis and religious leaders, who have exploited the Arab peasants'. Furthermore, the nationalism of these leaders was 'intensified by opposition to the Socialistic influence which Jewish workers are exerting on Arab workers'. Like the mainstream view of the Labour Party, the ILP concluded that the Arab nationalist movement 'has been led by its antagonism to the Jews to sympathise with Hitler and has adopted much of the mentality of Fascist Nationalism'.[148]

British imperialism feared 'both the Arab Nationalists and the Jewish Socialists' as both groups were 'a menace to Imperialism'. Therefore, Britain was pursuing a policy of divide and rule. As a result, the 'first duty' of the socialist movement was to 'encourage unity between the Jewish and Arab working-class populations'. This was to be achieved by supporting the Left *Poale Zion* and *Hashomer Hatzair* in their efforts to 'develop a sense of class unity between Jewish and Arab workers'. Hence, 'all attempts to exclude Arabs from employment, land cultivation, and education must be resisted'. Instead, the Arab workers

[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Ibid.

'must be encouraged to join trade unions, Co-operative organisations, and working-class parties'. The ultimate aim was summarised as 'to combine the workers and peasants of both races in the struggle against Jewish Capitalism, Arab Feudalism and British Imperialism'. It should be noted that the reference here to 'Jewish Capitalism' was different to the anti-Semitic Nationalist Socialist notion. In this context, Jewish capitalism was the counterpart to Arab feudalism, namely the anti-working-class element within the nationalist movement in Palestine.

The ILP's stance was resolutely anti-Zionist in the sense that it insisted that:

> The Jews in Palestine must give up the idea that they will have any right to establish a predominately Jewish State. They must face the fact that ultimately Palestine will become part of a federation including the Arab States of Syria, Trans-Jordania, Iraq, Saudi-Arabia and probably Egypt.

One reason cited for the necessity of Jews in Palestine to adopt an anti-Zionist position was the belief that the reliance upon British imperialism to defend the 'National Home' and failure to bridge the gap between Jews and Arabs would mean a 'terrible fate' for the Jews in Palestine when the 'inevitable' Arab national revolt brought independence. However, although the position was anti-Zionist, it still was not pro-Arab nationalist. Like the Labour Party, the ILP saw the way to socialism as being under a 'Jewish (socialist) leadership', the only difference being that this would be achieved by the left-wing of the Labour Zionist movement rather than the right-wing *Histadrut*.[149]

The question of immigration was especially problematic. The report reiterated that Jewish immigration had brought about many positive developments, 'raising the standard of life' and spreading socialist ideas. However, it was argued that the question must be judged 'objectively by the actual situation in Palestine'. The conclusion was drawn that 'if continued immigration at this moment makes more difficult the realisation of unity between the Jewish and Arab workers and peasants', then 'Left Jewish Socialists should ask themselves whether it is immediately desirable in the light of the object which they have in view – the

[149] See Callaghan, *The Labour Party and Foreign Policy*, p. 159.

establishment of a united Arab-Jewish Republic, part of a Socialist Federation, which must include the surrounding Arab nations'.[150]

This was followed by the creation of a 'special commission' consisting of Maxton, Brockway, McGovern and Stephen, which published a report, entitled 'A Socialist Policy for Palestine'. This statement was submitted to the Peel Commission, which the British government had launched in the aftermath of the Arab revolt and ultimately recommended partition.[151] The ILP's document overwhelmingly reiterated what had already been outlined but included with some key additions and amendments. An important shift was in relation to organisation. Rather than the emphasis being placed upon Palestinian Arab workers being organised by Left Labour Zionists, it was now argued that entirely new workers' organisations should be created.[152] Immigration once again proved the most difficult issue. For instance, the report declared that the Jewish colonisation of Briobhizan was proving inadequate for non-Russian Jews and that facilitating Jewish migration to Australia should be considered.[153] In his preface to the pamphlet *Whither Palestine?* written by Labour Zionist Zeev Abramovitch in 1936, Maxton clearly expressed the tension between socialist ideological opposition to Zionism and the humanitarian concern for Jewish refugees fleeing fascist persecution:

> The Independent Labour Party in common with most other Socialist Parties, is not inclined to accept the Zionist view. It does, however, recognise the urgent need for some place, or places on the surface of the globe where Jewish workers can live without having to face daily danger of imprisonment, torture, starvation or butchery.[154]

Indeed, in these circumstances Maxton even appears to have regarded the British Empire itself as a potentially benevolent entity. In a parliamentary debate on providing assistance for persecuted Jews in Nazi Germany in November 1938, Lansbury brought up the possibility of consulting with the High Commissioners of the various dominions in order to grant asylum

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[150] Ibid.
[151] 'ILP Report For Palestine Commission', *Glasgow Herald*, 29 October, 1936. For more on the Peel Commission and its recommendations see Penny Sinanoglou 'The Peel Commission and Partition, 1936-1938' in R. Miller (ed.), *Britain, Palestine and Empire: The Mandate Years* (Farnham, 2010), pp. 119-140.
[152] *A Socialist Policy For Palestine: Report of the Special Commission of the Independent Labour Party* (London, 1936), p. 5.
[153] Ibid, p. 1.
[154] James Maxton, 'Preface', in Zeev Abramovitch, *Whither Palestine?* (London, 1936), p. 6.

there. When Chamberlain replied that this was 'not a matter for the government', Maxton asked, 'While the Dominions are not a matter for this Government, is there not a vast colonial empire in which something definite could be done?'[155] Therefore, rather paradoxically, Maxton demanded an end to limits on Jewish immigration into Palestine while remaining ideologically anti-Zionist and called on the British government to utilise its colonies' lack of political autonomy to provide refuge to persecuted European Jews, while maintaining an anti-colonial stance. Like Brockway, Maxton also emphasised that 'no problem' was 'more insistent, complex and more difficult of solution' than the situation in Palestine.[156]

The ILP commission made clear that socialists must 'accept the principle of freedom of migration, irrespective of race or colour'.[157] But this was predicated upon the condition that such immigration did not adversely affect the standard of life and the economic conditions of the native workers. Thus, it was argued that Jewish immigration to Palestine must not take 'the political form of a foreign occupation' which sought to establish a Jewish state. The 'desirable' solution was to quickly establish joint Jewish-Arab workers' organisations. Immigration would then be carried out 'in conjunction' with these organisations, but the practicalities of this policy were not explained. In the immediate term, immigration should be allowed to continue on the basis that employment was guaranteed to each immigrant and that Jewish labour organisations no longer refused to employ Arab workers.[158]

Labour support for the Palestinian Arab cause was rare, indeed as Kelemen has written, 'the [Palestinian] Arab case did not have a single prominent Labour Party advocate in the 1930s'.[159] In the House of Commons, Labour denied the legitimacy of the Palestinian Arab revolt and urged the government to resist its demands.[160] However, within the post-disaffiliation ILP, anti-Zionism was widespread. Hence, one exception to the prevailing opinion within the Labour movement was Alex Gossip, an ILPer and leader of the National Amalgamated Furnishing Trades' Association, who, as we have seen, was centrally involved in the British section of the LAI. Gossip moved a motion at the Labour Party conference of 1936 which attempted to put forward the Palestinian Arab nationalist case but was heavily

[155] 'Chamberlain Deplores Nazi Pogroms', *JTA*, 15 November 1938.
[156] Maxton, 'Preface', *Whither Palestine?* p. 5.
[157] *Socialist Policy For Palestine,* p. 5.
[158] Ibid., p. 6.
[159] Kelemen, 'Looking the Other Way', p. 146; Stanley Harrison, *Alex Gossip* (London, 1962), p. 55.
[160] Ibid., p. 144.

defeated.[161] Pacifist intellectuals Reginald Reynolds and Ethel Mannin emerged as perhaps the most strident anti-Zionists in the ILP [162] Reynolds had been a disciple of Gandhi before being appointed secretary of the No More War Movement (NMWM). Mannin was a prolific author and had developed ties with numerous anti-colonial activists. She was unequivocal in her support for Palestinian Arabs. Palestine was she wrote 'after all, their country, the property of neither the British nor the Jews'.[163] Reynolds was adamant that because Zionism was supported by British imperialism, socialists should oppose it, and instead support Arab demands for self-government.[164] In the 1930s, Maxton too supported the Palestinian nationalist case, repeatedly rejecting Zionism and asserting the demand for Palestine to be an independent Arab-majority state. But given that he put his name to the *Socialist Policy For Palestine* document, he clearly had reservations regarding the Arab nationalist movement and furthermore, as we have seen, was strongly opposed to the Arab nationalist demand to end to Jewish immigration.

In early 1937, ILP MPs Campbell Stephen and John McGovern visited Palestine in a tour organised by Left *Poale Zion*. They both returned with pro-Zionist sympathies.[165] Indeed, McGovern's subsequent support for Zionism was so strong that at the party's annual conference, Reynolds angrily accused McGovern of contradicting party policy.[166] During this visit, George Mansur of the Arab Workers' Society made repeated attempts to meet with them but was turned down.[167] Not only did the ILP MPs in question refuse to hear Mansur's case, but they actively challenged his claims to be an authentic representative of the Palestinian Arab labour movement. In a parliamentary debate, when the point was made that the Peel Commission had taken evidence from Mansur 'on behalf of Arab labour', Campbell

[161] Ibid., p. 145.
[162] Reginald Reynolds, *My Life and Crimes* (London, 1956), p. 165-166. Mannin and Reynolds were partners and had met at an ILP social event. Mannin joined the ILP in 1933, see Andy Croft, 'Ethel Mannin, the Red Rose of Love and the Red Flower of Liberty' in Angela Ingram and Daphne Patai (eds.), *Rediscovering Forgotten Radicals British Women Writers 1899–1939* (London, 1993), p. 212.
[163] Ethel Mannin, *Privileged Spectator* (London, 1939), p. 268.
[164] Reginald Reynolds, 'Palestine and Socialist Policy', *Spain and the World*, 29 June 1938 republished in *British Imperialism and the Palestine Crisis, Selections of the Anarchist Journal Freedom: 1938-1948* (London, 1989), p. 21.
[165] Brockway, *Inside the Left*, p. 292; Gorni, *British Labour Movement and Zionism*, p. 156.
[166] 'The Palestine Problem: ILP Policy is Clear', *New Leader*, 14 April 1939. Reynolds, a Quaker, was a leading pacifist and anti-colonial activist. On his return from India in 1930, he wrote for the *New Leader* and gave talks for ILP branches. However, he did not join because it was still affiliated to the Labour Party. He joined soon after disaffiliation. See Reynolds, *My Life and Crimes*, pp. 69-70 and p. 100.
[167] Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies, Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine 1906-1948* (London, 1996), p. 250.

Stephen remarked that Mansur 'represented no one but himself'.[168] In *The Arab Worker Under the Palestine Mandate*, Mansur referred to this incident and stated that part of the rationale for his pamphlet was 'in order to give the English reader some idea of why Arab labour… resents the well-known attitude of Col. Wedgwood and Mr Stephen'.[169] As Lockman has pointed out, the Palestinian Arab labour movement lacked the *Histadrut's* 'strong connections' with the international trade union movement and with 'European, especially British Labour and socialist parties'. Consequently, they were 'extremely frustrated by the inability to put their case before world public opinion'.[170] This was recognised by some in the interwar British labour press. An article discussing political situation in the Palestine published in the Glasgow-based ILP newspaper *Forward* commented, 'At anyrate [sic], our readers will do well to remember that all the news and propaganda coming to our press is Jewish – the Moslem side, so far, has hardly had a show'.[171]

It was not until November 1938 that Mansur contributed a piece in the *New Leader*, which was the first unequivocally pro-Arab piece from a Palestinian author that the paper had featured. This took the form of a reply to Mordekhay Orenstein of *Hashomer Hatzair*, whom Mansur accused of concealing the 'spirit of Zionism' behind a 'socialist façade'. On the question of immigration, Mansur compared the Palestinian situation to New Zealand. He pointed out that in New Zealand the Labour government had 'drastically restricted immigration excluding thousands of would-be Jewish settlers'.[172] Therefore, argued Mansur, 'We Arabs demand for our county the same self-determination as the people of New Zealand'. He insisted that just because Hitler and Mussolini were attempting to undermine the British Empire, it did not mean that the Arab nationalist movement was fascist. Recent scholarship on this question suggests that although some Arab nationalist leaders 'tried to gain German support' and 'were open to German propaganda', ultimately fascist influence on

[168] H.C. Debates, 21 July 1937, vol. 326, col. 2353.
[169] George Mansur, 'The Arab Worker Under the Palestine Mandate, (1937)', republished in *Settler Colonial Studies*, 2:1 (2012), p. 191.
[170] Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*, p. 250.
[171] 'Holy Men at Jerusalem', *Forward*, 31 August 1929.
[172] George Mansur, 'Palestine: The Arab Socialist Case: Our Quarrel Is With British Imperialism And Its Ally, Zionism', *New Leader*, 18 November 1938.

Palestinian society was 'clearly very limited', with the vast majority of Palestinian Arab society rejecting its doctrines.[173]

Mansur identified what he perceived as a double-standard in the ILP's policy, remarking 'from a paper such as the *New Leader*, which prides itself on its anti-imperialist policy one might have expected some expression of sympathy for our national struggle… I have looked in vain for such an expression'.[174] While Mansur was disappointed at the ILP's official stance, in contrast to the Labour party, the ILP had at least given Mansur a hearing. His repeated attempts to put the case to the Labour Party were dismissed.[175]

In May 1939, the ILP issued a policy statement signed by Brockway, Maxton and others which called upon Jewish and Arab workers to unite and form a 'strong militant Socialist Party' which would prove to be a force of 'social emancipation and national liberation'.[176] By now, the ILP leadership had dropped all objections to Jewish immigration into Palestine. It was imperative that while ensuring that other countries were open to Jewish immigration that the 'gates of Palestine' also remained 'open to the Jewish masses', persecuted by fascism.[177] This statement was signed by the ILP leadership and by leading anti-colonialists such as George Padmore. However, it appeared to have a broader appeal as further signatories included notable Labourites who were not connected with the ILP such as George Bernard Shaw, Leonard Woolf and Henry Nevinson.[178] As part of this effort, in June 1939, the ILP set up a British-based organisation entitled 'The Socialist Committee for Arab Jewish Workers' Unity in Palestine' which was chaired by Maxton.[179] Plans were made to hold a conference in Palestine which aimed to bring together Jewish and Arab socialists not only from Palestine but also from neighbouring countries.[180] However, with the outbreak of the Second World War, this failed to materialise.[181]

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[173] Rene Wildangel, 'More than the Mufti: Other Arab-Palestinian Voices on Nazi Germany, 1933-1945, and Their Post-War Narrations', in Israel Gershoni (ed.), *Arab Responses to Fascism and Nazism Attraction and Repulsion* (Austin, TX), p. 111.
[174] Mansur, 'Palestine: The Arab Socialist Case: Our Quarrel Is With British Imperialism And Its Ally, Zionism', *New Leader*, 18 November 1938.
[175] Christine Collette, 'The Utopian Visions of Labour Zionism, British Labour and the Labour and Socialist International in the 1930s' in Christine Collette and Stephen Bird (eds.), *Jews, Labour and the Left: 1918-48* (London, 2000), p. 81.
[176] 'A Call to the Workers and Peasants of Palestine', *New Leader*, 26 May 1939
[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid; 'ILP Call Reaches Palestine', *New Leader*, 2 June 1939.
[179] 'Arab Jewish Workers' Unity: ILP Forms a British Committee', *New Leader*, 16 June 1939.
[180] Ibid.
[181] Brockway, *Inside the Left*, p. 293.

Conclusion

Throughout the interwar years, the Labour Party, in common with European social democratic parties, supported the claims of the Zionist movement, while the sympathies of the communist left lay with the Arab nationalists. For some years after the war, the ILP was dominated by the pro-Zionist voices of foreign policy specialists such as MacDonald, Brailsford and Wedgwood. But Palestine demonstrated the ambiguity of Labour's new foreign policy in the sense that although all were agreed that no more secret treaties should be made, opinion was divided as to whether previous acts of secret diplomacy such as the Balfour Declaration should be adhered to. In the 1920s, the role of Zionist activists was crucial in shaping Labour's perceptions of Palestine. Not only did *Poale Zion* repeatedly help secure pro-Zionist motions at party conferences but in addition virtually all the visits to Palestine had been arranged by either Zionist or Labour Zionist organisations.

When, from 1927 onwards, the ILP leadership of Maxton and Brockway began to pursue a more strident anti-colonialist policy, Palestine proved to be problematic. For instance, George Lansbury, although firmly backing India and China's claims to national independence was a supporter of Zionism rather than Arab nationalism in Palestine.

In the 1930s, the ILP's policymakers recognised the need for a safe-haven for European Jews fleeing persecution but also feared that Jewish immigration into Palestine might damage the prospects for Arab-Jewish unity. As fascist persecution intensified, these concerns were eventually discarded. The party praised the work of the Jewish labour movement in Palestine but criticised the ethnically exclusivist policies. Like the Labour Party, the ILP expressed deep concerns about the 'feudal' leaders of the Palestinian Arabs and their fascist connections. However, whereas the Labour party distanced themselves, the ILP saw this as a reason to engage with the anti-colonial nationalists and steer them away from fascist influence. Essentially, the ILP repudiated the central aim of Zionism, namely the creation of a predominantly Jewish state in Palestine, believing Zionism to be supported by British imperialism as a pretext in order to continue to Britain's administration of Mandatory Palestine and undermine Arab nationalism. The party leadership saw the solution as being joint action by Arab and Jewish workers against the capitalist elements within the Zionist

movement, the feudal elements within the Arab nationalist movement and against British imperialism.

The case of Palestine demonstrated how the ILP were faced with a genuine dilemma and were forced to attempt to reconcile conflicting aspects of its internationalist ideology, as sympathy for Jewish people facing fascist persecution in Europe and admiration for the activities of fellow labour activists had to be weighed against its anti-colonial sympathy for Arab nationalism. Within the social democratic movement as a whole, anti-Zionism proved to be a marginal force, and some of the anti-Zionism that did emerge did not translate into support for Palestinian Arab nationalism. The line of thought which rejected Zionism because it was a form of nationalism was equally as critical of Arab nationalism. Likewise, the economic argument against British expenditure in Palestine was unconcerned with championing the Palestinian Arab case. However, in the mid-1930s significant opposition to Zionism could be found within the ILP. From the late 1920s onwards, Maxton emerged as one of the few advocates of the Arab claim for independence, even if he did not support Arab nationalist demands vis-à-vis the stoppage of Jewish immigration into Palestine.

Chapter 3: Transnational Labour and Zionism in the Interwar Years

During the interwar years, Zionism was a genuinely transnational movement. When Josiah C. Wedgwood called for a 'united Jewish front' (by which was meant Zionist) 'from San Francisco to Shanghai', it was not simply a rhetorical flourish, as Zionist groups did indeed exist across North America, throughout Europe, Australasia and even in China.[1] Labour Zionism was no exception and *Poale Zion* was active in Britain, across Europe and in the US and South America.[2] Unsurprisingly therefore, there was a definite transnational dimension to pro-Zionist advocacy.

One significant way in which this manifested itself was that several prominent British Labourites promoted Zionism abroad, particularly in the English-speaking world. For example, Wedgwood, Harry Snell, Henry Nevinson, Ethel Snowden and H.N. Brailsford all lectured in the United States advocating the Zionist cause.[3] Meanwhile, articles on Palestine by MacDonald, Brailsford, Angell and Nevinson were published in the North American press.[4] Later in the period, John McGovern's censored pamphlet *My Impressions of Palestine,* which caused much controversy within the ILP, was published in New York by the American Zionist Student Federation.[5] Equally, those who took a more ambivalent view of the Zionist project such as Fenner Brockway addressed North American audiences on the topic of Palestine.[6] When, in the late 1930s, Brockway and Maxton endeavoured to create a united Arab-Jewish workers' movement in Palestine, Manya Schochat travelled from Palestine to New York in order to set up a 'Committee for Arab-Jewish Unity in America'.[7] Therefore, this network, which Maxton and Brockway had envisioned could result in Arab-Jewish unity was a transnational one. Although the idea originated with the ILP leadership in

[1] 'British Officials and Palestine Government Criticised', *JTA*, 3 September 1929.
[2] *LSI Second Congress Reports and Proceedings* (London, 1925), pp. 174-5; *LSI Fourth Congress Reports and Proceedings*, (London, 1931), p. 318.
[3] 'Sees Peril in Locarno Pact: Col. Wedgwood, British MP, in Boston', *Boston Globe*, 7 January 1926; 'Speakers Discuss Palestine Outlook', *Boston Globe*, 3 November 1929; 'Snell Says Labor Party Favors Jewish National Home in Palestine', *JTA*, 20 October 1930; 'Mrs Snowden to Lecture Here on Zionism', *JTA*,3 April 1923.
[4] See for example: Ramsay MacDonald, 'In Palestine Now', *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 25 January 1924; Henry Nevinson, 'The Zionist Colonies in Palestine: A Non-Jewish View', *CJC*, 26 November 1926; H.N. Brailsford, 'Great Britain and the Palestinian Mandate', *Menorah Journal XVII,* No. 3, December 1929; Brailsford, 'Caesar and the Appeal of Massacre', idem., May 1930; Norman Angell, 'A Non-Jew's Defence of Zionism', *New Judea*, March-April 1930.
[5] John McGovern, *My Impressions of Palestine* (New York, 1937).
[6] 'Discuss Palestine', *Border Cities Star*, 29 January 1929.
[7] 'Mania Schochat, Palestine Pioneer, To Set Up Arab-Jewish Unity Group Here', *JTA*, 6 August 1939.

London, plans were made to hold a conference in Palestine which would bring together activists and intellectuals from across Britain, Europe, North America and the Middle East in order to resolve the Palestine conflict.[8] A transnational solution was also promoted by Palestinian Arab socialist George Mansur, who posited the idea of a British labour committee to make a decisive declaration upon the question of Zionist immigration.[9] The internal debate within the labour movement over the future of Mandatory Palestine was not confined by national borders. For instance, when a correspondent to the *New Leader* wrote sympathetically about Arab nationalist claims, prominent German socialist Eduard Bernstein quickly responded by publishing a defence of Zionism and a scathing critique of the Palestinian Arab nationalist movement.[10]

Migration played a role too. For instance, Bernard Stone, who had previously served on the National Executive Committee of the British Labour Party, became a leading figure in numerous US-based organisations such as the Palestine Foundation Relief, the United Palestine Appeal and the Jewish National Fund of America.[11] These groups often hosted the likes of Wedgwood, as well as raising significant finances for the Zionist movement.[12] Activities also extended into Europe. For instance, Wedgwood met with the League of Revisionist Zionists in Berlin and attended the Zionist Congress in Zurich in an attempt to obtain wider support for his vision of Palestine becoming the 'Seventh Dominion' of the British Empire.[13] It is also important to take into account that the dissemination of literature had an impact within Palestine itself. For example, in an interview, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem revealed that he was familiar with MacDonald's *A Socialist in Palestine*, a text which al-Huseyni believed had 'misrepresented the situation before the world'.[14] Nevinson noted that some of the Jewish immigrants that he met in Palestine were readers of Brailsford's articles in the ILP's *New Leader*.[15] Various commentaries were also published in

[8] 'Arab Jewish Workers' Unity: ILP Forms a British Committee', *New Leader*, 16 June 1939.
[9] 'Arab Offer to Jews: British Labour to Form a Special Committee on Palestine Immigration?', *New Leader*, 20 January 1939.
[10] Eduard Bernstein, 'Les Nationalistes Arabes et la Mandat Palestinien', *Comite Socialiste Pour La Palestine Ouvriere, Bullettin* 5, Mai, 1930, p. 12.
[11] 'Stone Will Talk About Palestine', *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, 4 December 1924; 'Bernard Stone Named National Field Director of J.N.F.', *JTA*, 21 October 1930.
[12] 'Zionists Honor Colonel Wedgwood at Farewell Luncheon', *JTA*, 29 January 1926.
[13] 'Colonel Wedgwood Explains his Seventh Dominion Idea', *JTA*, 18 October 1928.
[14] 'My Hands Are Clean' Grand Mufti Asserts in Interview', *JTA*, 24 September 1929. For a detailed assessment of Muhammad Amin al-Husayni see Philip Mattar, 'The Mufti of Jerusalem and the Politics of Palestine', *Middle East Journal* 42 (1988), pp. 227-240.
[15] Nevinson, 'The Zionist Colonies in Palestine: A Non-Jewish View', *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 26 November 1926.

Palestine itself, for instance Brailsford wrote for the *Histadrut* official journal *Davar*.[16] Equally, numerous articles by Palestine-based Zionists appeared in the British labour press such as the *Labour Leader*, the *New Leader* and the *Socialist Review*.[17] A number of these were translated and published in Europe.[18] Throughout the period, many British and European socialists maintained regular correspondence with labour activists in Palestine.

Labour Zionists evidently perceived their activism as internationalist and regarded their project as an integral part of the international socialist movement. For instance, a few days before MacDonald's visit to Palestine in February 1922, David Ben-Gurion wrote to him remarking how delighted his organisation was to host 'one of the most foremost representatives of the international socialist movement'.[19] Furthermore, Ben-Gurion believed that the activity of Labour Zionism in Palestine was of interest to 'every socialist and thinker, of whatever nation he may be'.[20] When, in April 1923, Shlomo Kaplansky addressed the ILP's annual conference as an international fraternal delegate, he told the conference that the ILP had 'educated a whole generation in socialism and international solidarity'.[21] Another leading Labour Zionist Berl Locker told delegates gathered at the LSI congress of his pride that Labour Zionists had created what was in his opinion, 'the sole… outpost of International Socialism in the Orient'.[22] Meanwhile, Kaplansky argued that the creation of a pro-Zionist committee affiliated to the LSI was vital to 'remind the Jewish bourgeoisie and all anti-labour elements inside Zionism and outside Zionism that *Poale Zion* does not stand alone in their fight'.[23]

The British Commonwealth Labour Conference

One of the first significant transnational forums that paid serious attention to Palestine was the inaugural British Commonwealth Labour Conference, held at the House of Commons in

[16] H.N. Brailsford, 'England and Hitler', *Davar*, 14 April 1933.
[17] See for example Berl Locker, 'Poale Zionism: The Dream of Jewish Labour', *Labour Leader*, 5 December 1918; Lily Tobias, 'Jewish Women in Palestine', *Socialist Review*, 1919, pp. 61-67; Shlomo Kaplansky, 'Jews and Arabs in Palestine', *Socialist Review*, March 1922; Daisy Adler, 'Practical Socialism in Palestine', *New Leader*, 17 April 1925; Berl Katznelson, 'Labour in Palestine', *New Leader*, 14 March 1930.
[18] See Brailsford, 'L'avenir du Sionisme', *Comite Socialiste Pour La Palestine Ouvriere, Bullettin 5*, pp. 9-11; Angell, 'La defense du sionisme par un non-Juif', *Ibid*, pp. 13-14;'Le Travail en Palestine: une interview de Berl Katznelson, redactueur du Davar publicite dans le <<New Leader>> du 14 mars 1930', *Idem*, pp. 16-17.
[19] David Ben-Gurion to Ramsay MacDonald, 6 February 1922. Ramsay MacDonald papers, RMD 1/9/1.
[20] Ibid.
[21] ILP, *Annual Conference Report* (London, 1923), p. 104.
[22] LSI, *Fourth Congress of the Labour and Socialist International, Vienna 25th July to 1st August 1931, Reports and Proceedings* (London, 1932), p. 767.
[23] 'The How and Why of Labour's Pro-Palestine Committee', *JTA*, 28 August 1928.

the summer of 1925. This conference was initiated by the Labour Commonwealth Group which had been established by Johnson and Lansbury and advocated what has been termed 'Empire Socialism'.[24] Thus far, when scholars have discussed this conference it has been in the context of discussions between representatives from the Dominions and British Labourites over issues such as a united foreign policy and the debate on whether Labour should advocate emigration to as a solution to unemployment.[25]

On the agenda were questions such as international labour legislation, migration, inter-commonwealth political relations and labour conditions in mandates and colonies. The conference included delegations from Australia, Canada, Ireland, India, South Africa, British Guiana and Palestine.[26] Maxton, Snell and Lansbury were among the delegates representing the PLP. In addition, Friedrich Adler was present on behalf of the LSI and W.J. Brown represented the IFTU.[27] In his opening address, MacDonald informed the delegates that such a conference had been a long-term aim of the British Labour Party and reiterated his vision of creating an empire based not upon exploitation but the 'co-operative unity of nations and coming nations'.[28]

As discussed previously, Palestinian delegations to transnational labour gatherings consisted entirely of Labour Zionists and this conference proved to be no exception. Significantly however, while British and European labour had endorsed Zionism in its war aims without any notable opposition, the movement was met here, even in its socialist variant, with a significant degree of scepticism, confusion and even outright hostility. In the third session of the conference, which dealt with 'Industrial Legislation and Labour Protection in Mandated Territories', the contributions of Ben-Gurion and Isaac Benzevie provoked considerable opposition. For instance, Thomas Johnson, an Irish Labour Party TD, questioned Ben-Gurion over whether the proposals he had outlined amounted to segregation.[29] Serious criticism was expressed by labour representatives from colonial nations. For example, Johnson's concern was shared by India's Chaman Lall, who described the prospect of segregation as 'thoroughly

[24] Graham Walker, *Thomas Johnson* (Manchester, 1988), p. 67; Howe, *Anti-Colonialism*, p. 50; Thomas Johnston, *Memories* (London, 1952), pp. 49-50; Snell was also a founding member, see Snell, *Men Movements and Myself* (London, 1936), p. 211.
[25] Partha Sarathi Gupta, *Imperialism and the British Labour Movement 1914-1964* (New York, 1975), pp. 46-7.
[26] *Report of the First British Commonwealth Labour Conference* (London, 1925), pp. 4-5.
[27] Ibid., p. 4.
[28] Ibid., p. 6.
[29] Ibid., p. 40.

pernicious' and insisted that the Arabs and Jews in Palestine must combine 'in order to work up to one national community'.[30] His fellow Indian MLA N.M. Joshi stated that although he had 'great sympathy' with the aspiration of a Jewish national home, he found the project difficult to reconcile with his 'democratic spirit'.[31] Apparently ridiculing the intellectual basis of Zionism, Joshi drew laughter from the conference when he remarked 'if they started going back to the beginning of the world he did not know what country any of them would belong to'.[32] He argued that had the British government been sincere, it would have pursued a territorialist solution and endeavoured to create Jewish national home in Australia or Canada where there were 'vast tracts of land... still waiting for emigrants', rather than in Palestine where an Arab population already existed.[33] Essentially, Joshi accepted the labour but not the Zionist aspect of Labour Zionism. He concluded that the Indian labour movement were, 'quite prepared to help their friends in Palestine as a working-class people for their working-class movement', but not 'if they wanted to remain separate in culture and other things from the Arabs'.[34] For the Indian delegation, what distinguished Indian nationalism from Zionism was that the former sought to unite Hindus and Muslims whereas the latter was deemed to be potentially divisive force.[35]

In his contribution, George Lansbury appeared to characterise Zionism as a form of European settler-colonialism, referring to the Zionists in Palestine as the 'white minority'.[36] In addition, he queried how central government in Palestine would function and which of the two communities would control the various aspects of the state.[37] Lansbury concurred with the Indian delegation's point that while Arab and Jewish individuals should possess equal rights, it appeared problematic to them for the Jewish minority and the Arab majority to enjoy equal political representation.[38] Despite praising the achievements of socialist Zionism, prominent ILPer and miners' leader Robert Smillie also expressed misgivings about what he described as Ben-Gurion's 'extraordinary... proposal' for 'some form of dual government which, in the

[30] Ibid., p. 41.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., p. 43.
[33] Ibid., p. 43.
[34] Ibid., p. 44.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid., p. 41.
[37] Ibid., p. 41.
[38] Ibid.

same community, would give the Arabs and the Jews the right of separate self-government'.[39] However, in reply, Ben-Gurion insisted that his arguments were consistent with internationalism. In his concluding remarks to the session he argued that:

> Internationalism meant the brotherhood of nations, and he did not think he need say they were in favour of full Internationalism. They were out to promote International brotherhood and understanding in the working-classes but they were entitled to national independence, as well as the Indians and other nations... In England there was no national question... In other countries it was different, and they could not ignore it, especially if they were true Internationalists and were standing on the right of each nation to be free and equal.[40]

These remarks reveal that for Ben-Gurion, internationalism meant the right to national self-determination and the unity of the working class regardless of ethnicity. Moreover, Ben-Gurion manifestly held that it was self-evident that as socialists, Labour Zionists adhered to this internationalist creed. Similarly, his fellow delegate Chaim Arlosoroff appealed to the notion of socialist internationalism with regard to the issue of Jewish immigration into Palestine, reminding the conference: 'they claimed [to support] free emigration... As Socialists and Internationalists they would not dispute that. Therefore, how could they deny it in the case of Palestine?'.[41] Thus, it is evident that these discussions were profoundly informed by two central and interrelated questions, namely: what did it mean to be an internationalist and how should this concept be applied to Palestine?

The Labour and Socialist International: 1923-1931

In the years following the first world war, Zionism became a pressing question for the institutions of the Eurocentric international socialist movement. This was reflected in the fact that the question of establishing a Jewish national home was included in the war aims statement adopted in February 1918.[42] Established in May 1923, the LSI was the successor to the Second International and often continued to be referred to as the Second International in interwar political discourse. Prior to the First World War, the Palestine-based *Poale Zion* had

[39] Ibid., 45. Even strong supporters of Zionism such as Wedgwood voiced opposition to this proposal, see Gorni, *British Labour Movement and Zionism*, pp. 40-41.
[40] Ibid., p. 46.
[41] Ibid., p. 44. Arlosoroff, who became the political director of the Jewish Agency and a leading figure in Mapai, was assassinated in 1933.
[42] Labour Party, *War Aims*, p. 12.

been unsuccessful in its efforts to affiliate to the Second International.[43] The party then joined the short-lived Vienna Union before successfully affiliating to the LSI in July 1924 and gaining representation on its executive.[44] Indeed, it was the transnational nature of *Poale Zion* which had initially caused difficulties for the LSI. Because the LSI was strictly organised by the affiliation of national parties, it proved 'somewhat difficult' to include *Poale Zion.*[45] However, an arrangement was made whereby *Poale Zion* was recognised as the national representatives of Palestine and *Poale Zion* groups in other countries would be considered as sections of their respective socialist parties.[46]

As we saw in the previous chapter, a number of prominent British Labour figures visited Palestine and wrote enthusiastically about the Zionist project upon their return. This phenomenon extended to Europe as several socialists, most notably LSI president, Belgian socialist leader and statesman Emile Vandervelde as well as the Austrian socialist Julius Braunthal, who later wrote the first comprehensive history of the LSI, both toured Palestine during the interwar years.[47]

After MacDonald's 1922 excursion, the most prominent visitor to Palestine was Vandervelde. During his tour in April 1928, he emphasised what he perceived to be Zionism's internationalist credentials. In a lecture given at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Vandervelde claimed that Zionism, 'with its upbuilding work and its fraternal tendencies toward the Arabs' was proving to be 'an important factor toward international peace'.[48] Commenting upon Vandervelde's support for Zionism, Christine Collette has described it as 'remarkable that a nationalist vision should act so powerfully upon an internationalist'.[49] While theoretically true, in the historical context, Vandervelde's advocacy of Zionism was not particularly extraordinary. After all, European social democracy had been officially committed to Zionism since the publication of its War Aims memorandum of February 1918

[43] Kelemen, 'In the Name of Socialism', p. 333.
[44] Ibid., p. 332.
[45] LSI, *Second Congress of the Labour and Socialist International: Reports and Proceedings* (London, 1925), p. 174.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Kelemen, 'In the Name of Socialism', p. 336. For Braunthal's book see Julius Braunthal, *History of the International 1914-1943* (London, 1967).
[48] 'Vandervelde Impressed by Palestine's Progress', *JTA*, 18 April 1928. The term 'upbuilding' was used by Zionists and their supporters to refer to the development of Jewish settlements in Palestine which would form the Jewish national home. See, for example, Arthur Ruppin, *Three Decades of Palestine Speeches and Papers on the Upbuilding of the Jewish National Home* (Jerusalem, 1936).
[49] Collette, 'Utopian Visions', p. 71.

and many other outstanding self-professed internationalists such as Léon Blum, Albert Thomas, MacDonald, Brailsford and Angell supported Zionism.[50] This was because in their vision of internationalism, there was no tension between nationalism and internationalism, as the ideal form of international relations was based upon the co-operation of free nation states.

On his return, Vandervelde wrote a book praising the activities of Labour Zionists in Palestine. Its title, *Le Pays d'Israel: un Marxiste en Palestine*, directly echoed MacDonald's 1922 work *A Socialist in Palestine.* Vandervelde was clearly familiar with MacDonald's and Wedgwood's work on Palestine and approvingly cited both authors.[51] So congruent were their perspectives that an article in the communist theoretical journal *Labour Monthly* criticised all three of these works, particularly in regard to the claim that Zionism had brought about improvements in Palestinian Arab wages and working conditions.[52] However, Vandervelde's book was a considerably more substantial study, particularly when compared with MacDonald's, which was essentially a compilation of essays, articles and interviews. It also appears that Vandervelde was influenced by developments abroad in an organisational sense. In both Britain and France, cross-party pro-Zionist groups had been established.[53] A few months after returning from Palestine, Vandervelde was the driving force behind the creation of an equivalent Belgian parliamentary committee.[54]

When assessing the factors involved in European labour's support for Zionism, scholarly opinion has been divided. Kelemen has highlighted receptiveness to the ideology of Labour Zionism whereas Sargent considered the activism of *Poale Zion* to be the key factor in ensuring this support. However, another interconnected aspect which requires emphasis is the role of individual agency. Labour Zionism was not merely tacitly accepted but actively promoted by British and European labourites. It is evident that key concepts such as the notion of 'upbuilding', were directly taken from the repertoire of Labour Zionist rhetoric.[55] However, when Labour Zionism was transmitted across borders, it was not simply reiterated but re-imagined within a national context. For instance, to a British audience, MacDonald

[50] 'Albert Thomas: Obituary', *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 20 May 1932; Yaccov N. Goldstein, *Jewish Socialists in the United States: The Cahan Debate* (Brighton, 1998), p. 33; Leon Blum, *For All Mankind* (London, 1946), p. 86.
[51] Jean-Emile Vandervelde, *Le Pays d'Israel: Un Marxiste En Palestine* (Paris, 1929). Wedgwood's *Seventh Dominion* was quoted on p. 200 and MacDonald's *Socialist in Palestine* was quoted on p. 213.
[52] J.B., 'The Class Character of the Palestine Rising', *Labour Monthly*, March 1930, pp. 159-166.
[53] 'Inter-party Parliament Committee for Palestine Formed in Commons', *JTA*, 22 October 1926.
[54] 'Belgian Statesmen Form Pro Palestine Group', *JTA*, 28 December 1928.
[55] *British Commonwealth Labour Conference*, p. 42.

compared the socialist Zionists in Palestine to the founders of the British ILP.[56] Additionally, MacDonald told an audience in a mining area that the Zionists in Palestine were 'building a New Jerusalem', an expression which was widely used in the British labour movement. In Belgium, Vandervelde made a direct comparison between Labour Zionist leaders and heroic figures in Flemish folklore.[57] In Braunthal's memoir, published in English by the Left Book Club in London, Wales was utilised in an analogy to illustrate the comparatively small size of Palestine.[58] Furthermore, Vandervelde and MacDonald were very influential figures within their own national labour movement and the international socialist movement. For example, Brockway regarded Vandervelde as a 'remarkable leader' and the finest orator he had ever witnessed.[59] This was a considerable accolade when one considers the numerous talented orators that Brockway encountered during his political career. Through his leadership role, Vandervelde ensured that despite internal divisions within the LSI, official policy was resolutely pro-Zionist. During Vandervelde's presidency of the LSI, its executive passed a number of pro-Zionist resolutions. For instance, one typical statement called upon the British government to actively facilitate 'intensive and widespread Jewish colonisation'.[60] While *Poale Zion* in London published MacDonald's work, the relationship was reciprocal as MacDonald edited the ILP's journal the *Socialist Review*, which provided a platform for Labour Zionists.[61]

Although there was no discussion of Palestine at the LSI congress in Marseilles in 1925, Zionist concerns were brought before the World Migration Conference which took place in London in June 1926. This event was a joint initiative of the LSI and the IFTU. Here, *Poale Zion* successfully submitted proposals which called for the lifting of immigration restrictions in both North America and Europe and called on both the conference and the League of Nations to provide 'material and moral support' for the creation of the Jewish National Home in Palestine.[62] However, senior figures sounded a note of caution. For instance, despite praising the activities of the Jewish trade unions in Palestine, and deploring anti-Semitism in Europe, W.J. Brown's report also expressed the view that Palestine could only take in 'small

[56] MacDonald, *Socialist in Palestine*, p. 9.
[57] Janet L. Polasky, *The Democratic Socialism of Emile Vandervelde: Between Reform and Revolution* (Oxford, 1995), p. 217.
[58] Julius Braunthal, *In Search of the Millennium* (London, 1945), p. 312.
[59] Brockway, *Towards Tomorrow*, (London 1977), p. 93.
[60] 'Socialist International Urges Britain to Facilitate Jewish Immigration, Colonisation', *JTA*, 7 August 1930.
[61] Kelemen, *British Left and Zionism*, p. 15.
[62] 'World Migration Congress to Hear Report on Palestine and Jewish Migration', *JTA*, 15 June 1926.

numbers' of Jewish immigrants given that its capacity was limited 'both politically and economically'.[63]

At its congress in August 1928, the LSI gave serious attention to the colonial question for the first time. During this discussion, the British Labour Party's report revealed a key factor in British and European socialists' support for Zionism. It noted that the 'Jewish Socialist Labour Federation of Palestine' or *Histadrut* was one of the established few labour movements in the colonies, given that only in Palestine and the British Guiana were there labour movements affiliated to the LSI.[64] However, *Poale Zion* avoided full discussion of the issue of Palestine. As Shlomo Kaplansky argued, 'Palestine as a country of Jewish colonisation occupies a special position and does not come into the category of colonial countries'.[65]

Further progress from a Zionist point of view was made in August 1928 with the establishment of the Socialist Committee for Workers' Palestine.[66] However, pro-Zionist activities within the LSI did not go unchallenged and significantly, the opposition overwhelmingly emanated from leading Jewish figures in the European socialist movement. In February 1927, Wedgwood approached Otto Bauer with a view to convince the Austrian social democrats to support the Zionist movement, only for Bauer to reject these overtures. Bauer regarded Zionism as a 'bourgeois affair' and deemed those on the left who supported it as 'not perfect socialists'.[67] Furthermore, when *Poale Zion* first made its attempt to establish a pro-Zionist Palestine committee within the LSI, the proposal was firmly opposed by Bauer, along with Freidrich Adler and leading Bundist Raphael Abramovich. As the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* reported, 'Action was blocked by the opposition of the Jewish socialists until a special conference of all Socialist leaders… undertakes a thorough discussion of the matter'.[68] Adler was critical of the activities of the *Poale Zion*, claiming that they were 'playing too prominent a part in the International compared with the other parties'.[69] Furthermore, he branded their 'independent actions' as 'unconstitutional' and moreover

[63] 'World Migration Congress is Opened in London', *JTA*, 23 June 1926.
[64] *The Colonial Problem: Material Submitted to the Third Congress of the Labour and Socialist International* (London, 1928), p. 43.
[65] 'The How and Why of Labour's Pro-Palestine Committee', *JTA*, 28 August 1928.
[66] Kelemen, *British Left and Zionism*, p. 25.
[67] 'Austrian Socialists Leaders Refuse to Lend Support for Palestine Movement', *JTA*, 9 February 1927.
[68] 'Palestine Question Causes Sharp Clash in Amsterdam International Executive', *JTA*, 7 August 1928.
[69] Ibid.

opined that *Poale Zion* was 'introducing chaos and trouble into the Palestinian problem'.[70] Similarly, in the LSI's youth section, although the majority proved supportive of Zionism, the move did not go uncontested. In August 1928, a Jewish delegate unsuccessfully moved a motion which argued that the Palestine question should not be discussed 'on the grounds that it was a national and chauvinist question', and that Zionism aimed 'to drive the Arabs out of their country'.[71] Eventually, the Socialist Committee for Workers' Palestine was created; however, the establishment of the group did not result in the end of anti-Zionist criticisms. For example, in March 1931, at a meeting of the executive committee of the LSI, Victor Atler of the Polish Bundists continued to characterise Zionism as a 'dangerous Utopia' which was 'an ideal of the Jewish bourgeoisie'.[72] Indeed, such was the extent of the scepticism regarding Zionism that European advocates such as Braunthal felt it necessary to address in detail the left-wing anti-Zionist case.[73] By contrast, MacDonald and Wedgwood associated anti-Zionism with conservative politics and made no reference to the left-wing argument against Zionism.[74]

From the outset, the LSI Palestine committee stressed the connection between Zionism and socialist internationalism. When Vandervelde moved the resolution which brought the committee into being, he argued that Labour Zionism deserved 'the assistance of all socialists' because it was a movement based upon 'socialist transformation and international solidarity'.[75] The committee declared that the *Histadrut* was 'bearing high the banner of international socialism and seeking peace with the Arab working class'.[76] Furthermore, in the aftermath of the Palestinian Arab nationalist uprising of 1929, the organisation reaffirmed its belief that 'international social democracy' would support the creation of a Jewish national home 'based upon the principles of international socialism'.[77]

According to its socialist advocates, what distinguished Labour Zionism from typical nationalism was that it advocated a form of nationalism which was inclusive. The committee declared:

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[70] Ibid. See also Jack Jacobs, *On Socialists and the Jewish Question After Marx* (London, 1992), p. 134.
[71] 'The How and Why of Labour's Pro-Palestine Committee', *JTA*, 28 August 1928.
[72] 'Palestine Question at the Socialist International', *JTA*, 17 March 1931.
[73] Braunthal, *In Search of the Millennium*, pp. 310-314.
[74] MacDonald, *Socialist in Palestine*, p. 21 and p. 24.
[75] 'Leaders of Socialist International Create Pro-Palestine Committee', *JTA*, 12 August 1928.
[76] 'Leading International Socialists Protest Against Labour Government's Palestine White Paper', *JTA*, 8 January 1931.
[77] 'Labour's Attitudes on the Palestine Events', *JTA*, 10 November 1929.

> Imbued with your ideas of international socialism, you, Jewish workers, have taken upon yourselves this great task of planting in this little corner of Asia… a society from which hatred, chauvinism and narrow and limited nationalism would be banished forever.[78]

Thus, the appeal to internationalism operated on two levels. First, the establishment of a Jewish national home would mean national status for an oppressed people. Secondly, it was argued that Labour Zionism itself was an internationalist movement as it sought to unite Jewish and Palestinian Arab workers.

The ILP, for its part, evidently perceived Labour Zionism as being a *potentially* anti-colonial force in Palestine. However, unlike the mainstream Labour movement, it adopted a critical attitude towards Labour Zionism. Thus, when in 1929 the ILP established an 'Imperialism Committee', it met with leading Labour Zionists to pressurise them to increase their efforts to establish a joint Arab-Jewish conference.[79] However, when the ILP attempted to push the LSI towards a policy which engaged with and supported anti-colonial nationalism, Labour Zionists sounded a note of caution. The ILP resolution presented to the congress of 1931 called upon the LSI to announce its support for anti-colonial national liberation movements:

> It declares that every people has the right to independence and that the recognition of this right is the *only* foundation of a true internationalism. It sends its greetings to all the peoples who are engaged in the struggle against imperialism. [My emphasis].[80]

After congratulating the nationalist movement in India and highlighting the socialistic policies adopted by the Indian National Congress, the ILP went on to affirm support for various anti-colonial nationalist movements, which seemingly included Palestinian Arab nationalism at the exclusion of Zionism:

> The [LSI] Congress expresses its sympathy and support of the peoples of Egypt, the Near East, Palestine, the Dutch East Indies, Africa, China and other parts of the world in their fight

[78] Ibid.
[79] ILP, *Annual Conference Report* (London, 1928), p. 26.
[80] LSI, *Fourth Congress of the Labour and Socialist International, Vienna 25th July to 1st August 1931, Reports and Proceedings* (London, 1932), p. 680.

> for political and social liberty, and calls upon the Socialist Parties in imperialist countries to support their claims by every means possible.[81]

At this time, Brockway completely rejected Zionism on the grounds that it served the interests of capitalism and imperialism.[82] He claimed that the ILP has 'never been satisfied... with the policy which the Labour Government has been conducting in Palestine, just in the same way as we have not been satisfied with its policy in India'.[83] Maxton too had stated his support for Palestinian Arab claims.[84] Defending his party's position, Brockway compared Britain's occupation of India and Egypt to the war-time German occupation of Belgium and stressed that it would be a 'shameful thing if this Congress passed away without making a strong declaration against imperialism, which means that subject people are kept under an alien rule against their will by force of arms'.[85] Furthermore, the ILP proposed that as part of its attempt to create an 'all inclusive international', the LSI ought to 'take steps to establish and maintain sympathetic contact with nationalist bodies in various countries engaged in the struggle for national independence and against imperialist domination'.[86]

In the discussion that followed, Labour Zionist Berl Locker told the congress that he fully agreed with 'the trend of the idea' that the LSI should 'show more interest in the colonial problem' and provide more support to working class movements outside Europe.[87] However, he added a serious criticism of the ILP's analysis and proposals, remarking:

> How is it, though, that our friends of the I.L.P., who in Europe see the class antagonisms so clearly, do not appear to see that these class antagonisms are also present in the East, for which reason every Socialist Party must be very careful before it gets into contact with anyone there.[88]

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[81] Ibid., p. 680.
[82] 'Palestine Does Not Interest Us as Specifically Jewish Question', *JTA*, 3 September 1931. This indicated a shift in Brockway's position, as he had previously expressed his support for Labour Zionism and, as recently as October 1930, had been perceived by the *Jewish Chronicle* as sympathetic to Zionism, see 'Mr James Maxton Changes His Views', *Jewish Chronicle*, 3 October 1930.
[83] 'Palestine Does Not Interest Us as Specifically Jewish Question', *JTA*, 3 September 1931.
[84] 'Mr J. Maxton Support the Arabs', *Jewish Chronicle*, 19 October 1929.
[85] LSI, *Fourth Congress of the Labour and Socialist International, Reports and Proceedings*, p. 476.
[86] Ibid., p. 761.
[87] Ibid., p. 767.
[88] Ibid.

Locker argued that the focus of the LSI must be to help create 'a strong Labour Movement in all the eastern countries... so that the Labour Movement is no longer merely a matter for Europe and America'.[89] Therefore, the emphasis was placed upon creating workers' organisations rather than supporting existing anti-colonial nationalist movements. For Locker, Labour Zionism represented 'the nucleus for a great Labour Movement throughout the Orient'.[90] This view tallied with the analysis of the LSI leadership who concluded that it was 'particularly necessary to limit close relationship to real Labour organisations. The general national movement should certainly be studied also, but the hope of a close collaboration with the International can only be supported in the case of those organisations which are built up as organisations of the working class'.[91]

There was also a gender dimension to support for Zionism. At the LSI's women's conference, Martha Hoffman, a delegate from Palestine, argued that one of Zionism's merits was its progressive stance on women's rights, blaming the difficulty in implementation on Palestinian Arab society:

> Arab women are far from possessing any rights, and in Palestine, in that oriental country, it has been fearfully difficult for the Jewish Socialist immigrant women to obtain equal rights, although they were long ago given to Jewesses by the Zionist organisation. But to put them into practice in that country, where the Arab woman is still so entirely without rights, and indeed enslaved, is extraordinarily difficult.[92]

Thus, many western socialists evidently shared with Labour Zionists an Orientalist outlook and discourse. As well as Hoffman, Locker also spoke of Zionism challenging the 'stagnation of the Near East'.[93]

The League Against Imperialism: 1927-1932

At the founding congress of the LAI in February 1927, both the left-wing faction of *Poale Zion* and the Arab National Congress of Palestine were represented.[94] Extending the invitation to both of these organisations was a clear indication of the inclusiveness of

[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.
[91] *Fourth Congress of the Labour and Socialist International, Reports and Proceedings,* p. 109.
[92] Ibid., p. 870.
[93] Ibid., p. 763.
[94] Hen-Tov, *Communism and Zionism,* p. 47.

Münzenberg's strategy. After all, Zionism, even its socialist variant, had long been anathema to the communist movement, while the Palestinian Arab delegate Jamal al-Husayni, nephew of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, was a prominent member of Palestine's elite class.[95] This episode vividly illustrated the competing and mutually exclusive nature of these two nationalist movements, both of which sought recognition as the sole legitimate anti-colonial nationalist force in Palestine.

Unsurprisingly therefore, both sides attempted to discredit each other. At the first congress, the Left *Poale Zion* raised concerns about the 'feudal-reactionary' nature of al-Husayni's politics and indeed, soon after, the LAI moved to expel him.[96] In its attempt to explain why the LAI should support Zionism rather than Palestinian Arab nationalism, the Left *Poale Zion* argued that the Arab National Congress was inherently reactionary because the bourgeoisie sided with the feudal ruling class in Palestine.[97] On the other hand, they maintained that the Zionist bourgeoisie was more progressive in the sense that it had an interest in the economic development of Palestine. Therefore, on these grounds, it was argued that the LAI should not be opposed to Zionist immigration into Palestine.[98]

A further consequence of the LAI's initial non-sectarian outlook was that personalities who were sympathetic towards Zionism, such as Albert Einstein and Lansbury, held leading roles within the organisation. It is clear why Lansbury could simultaneously support both colonial nationalism and Zionism. In an article reflecting on the LAI's Brussels congress, he wrote that part of 'the ideal of international solidarity' was the 'recognition of the right of all peoples in all lands to organise and develop their own national life'.[99] Therefore, it followed that if the Jews were a nation, then they too should have the right to develop a 'National Home'. However, as we have seen, Lansbury was not an uncritical supporter of Zionism, expressing concerns about the prospect of a 'white minority' of European Jews ruling the native Arab population.[100] Nevertheless, soon after his departure from the LAI, Lansbury joined the LSI's pro-Zionist Palestine committee.[101]

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[95] For more see Illan Pappé, *The Rise and Fall of a Palestinian Dynasty: The Husaynis, 1700-1948* (London, 2010).
[96] Hen-Tov, *Communism and Zionism*, p. 47.
[97] 'Déclaration (Résolution) de la délégation du Parti Ouvrier de Palestine', pp. 1-5. IISH, LAI microfilm 21.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Lansbury, 'A Great Week-end', *Lansbury's Labour Weekly,* 19 February 1927.
[100] Sargent, 'British Labour Party and Palestine', p. 48.
[101] Kelemen, *British Left and Zionism,* p. 25.

Like Lansbury, Einstein saw Zionism as being compatible with both internationalism and anti-colonialism. While Einstein believed that nationalism was 'the curse of mankind', he equally maintained that Zionism was 'quite different'.[102] For Einstein, 'The nationalism of many a modern state stands for an extension of its power through territorial aggrandizement and through the subjectivity of smaller nationalities. Zionism is the opposition to that force. It is a defensive nationalism. I mean not only Zionism but all the movements for independence and self-determination by oppressed peoples'.[103] He visited Palestine and wrote in glowing terms about the Zionist project, arguing that it had not dispossessed 'a single Arab' and had bestowed numerous benefits upon the Palestinian Arab population.[104] Ultimately, Einstein's Zionism was evidently more cultural than political.[105] Indeed, he argued that the 'unity of the Jews the world over is in no way a political unity and should never become such'.[106] Nevertheless, he participated in the mainstream Zionist movement. For example, he attended the founding conference of the Jewish Agency in Zurich. However, other prominent anti-colonial nationalists associated with the LAI such as Gandhi and Nehru were resolutely opposed to Zionism.[107]

At the second congress of the LAI, held in Frankfurt in July 1929, an explicitly anti-Zionist policy was confirmed. A typical comment came from an Iraqi delegate who condemned the Balfour declaration as 'camouflage' for British imperialism.[108] The resolution adopted by the LAI not only attacked Labour Zionism but also its social democratic supporters. Zionism, the majority view claimed, was 'dangerous' because it was 'in the cloak of humanitarian work and develops in Palestine a social reformism patterned after the ideas of the second Socialist International'.[109] For the LAI, this explained the activities of Vandervelde, MacDonald, Blum and others in the LSI's Palestine Committee.[110]

Despite the severe tensions on display at this congress, the uneasy coalition of communists, left wing social democrats, nationalists and intellectuals remained largely intact. However,

[102] 'Einstein Tells How Zionism Meets Internationalism', *JTA*, 11 July 1929.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Albert Einstein, *About Zionism*: *Speeches and Letters* (New York, 1931), pp. 79-81.
[105] Einstein, *About Zionism,* p. 50.
[106] 'Einstein Sees Unity of Jews Not Political but Resting on Moral Tradition Only', *JTA*, 15 December 1930.
[107] Richard Edmund Ward, *India's Pro-Arab Policy: A Study in Continuity* (New York, 1992), pp. 12-13.
[108] 'News in Brief', *JTA*, 30 July 1929.
[109] Ibid.
[110] Ibid.

reactions to the events in Palestine in August finally fractured the organisation. Official LAI pronouncements backed the Arab uprising as a revolt against 'the economic and political serfdom' created by British imperialism.[111] Consequently, honorary president Albert Einstein resigned, explicitly citing the organisation's 'pro-Arab' policy.[112] Einstein did not see the events of August 1929 as a legitimate anti-colonial uprising against Zionism and British imperialism but as 'brutal massacres [carried out] by a fanaticised mob'.[113] Similarly Maxton's unwillingness to comply with LAI demands to directly challenge his ILP colleagues' assessment of the situation in Palestine suggests that he did not share the official LAI view regarding the violent episodes. Indeed, on 1 September, Maxton addressed a mass demonstration at the Albert Hall called by the English Zionist Federation in protest at the 'disturbances' in Palestine.[114] At this meeting, which was addressed by Chaim Weizmann and other leading Zionists, Josiah C. Wedgwood and Maxton were reportedly 'the only well-known non-Jews on the platform'.[115] Unlike Wedgwood, Maxton was not a supporter of Zionism, and thus his presence is better explained as an act of solidarity with the grieving Anglo-Jewish community. Nevertheless, at the end of the meeting, a pro-Zionist resolution was passed.[116] Just over two weeks later, Maxton was expelled on account of his supposed 'support for the government's measures to crush the Arab revolt in Palestine'.[117] The suggestion that Maxton had openly backed the despatching of troops to Palestine was untrue, but his failure to speak out was seen as tacit approval. As Bridgeman wrote, 'there was no doubt whatever' that Maxton had 'displayed no interest whatever in the events of tremendous importance in colonial countries leading to the despatch of troops and warships to Palestine, with much bloodshed'.[118] It is evident that by late 1930, a number of prominent ILPers such as Brockway, W.J. Brown and Cecil L'Estrange Malone who had once been involved in the LAI project were to varying degrees sympathetic to Zionist aspirations.[119] Furthermore, at the LAI's next executive meeting, after significant deliberation, the Arab nationalists, along with

[111] 'League Against Imperialism', *The Times*, 10 Sept 1929.
[112] Hen-Tov, *Communism and Zionism*, p. 153.
[113] Einstein, *About Zionism*, p. 76.
[114] 'Religious World: Jewry Prays for Its Dead, Morning and Protest at the Albert Hall', *Auckland Star*, 23 November 1929.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Ibid.
[117] 'League Against Imperialism: The Chairman Expelled', *The Mercury*, 21 September 1929.
[118] Bridgeman to F. Gardner, 21 September 1929. DBN 4/3.
[119] 'Mr James Maxton Changes His Views', Jewish *Chronicle*, 3 October 1930.

the Palestine Communist Party (PCP) which had an overwhelmingly Jewish membership, successfully made the case to expel the Left *Poale Zion* representatives.[120]

The LAI's leading activist in Palestine was another member of the al-Huseyni dynasty. Hamedi al- Huseyni, who served on the international executive of the LAI, also headed up the left wing of the Arab National Congress. On his return from LAI activities in Cologne in January 1929, he was placed under police surveillance and in the aftermath of the August uprising was jailed along with other LAI activists.[121] The LAI deemed the response of the MacDonald government to be part of 'a wave of terror' unleashed against anti-colonial nationalist movements across the world. It declared that in Palestine, India and Ireland, the prisons were 'overflowing with political prisoners who have fought for the independence of their countries'. Reaffirming its belief in the shared interests of workers in imperialist and colonial countries, the LAI declared 'the working masses of Palestine, India, Ireland Great Britain and the whole world have no interest in supporting the imperialist plans of a so-called Labour government'.[122] In Britain, the now diminished LAI attempted to actively challenge the pro-Zionist narrative. For instance, in early 1932, Bridgeman and Saklatvala both addressed a meeting of the (pro-Zionist) Palestinian Students Association in London. Saklatvala insisted that the Balfour Declaration was an imperialist measure and called on the students 'not to allow British politicians to engender hatred between Jews and Arabs in Palestine'. Similarly, Bridgeman emphasised that Palestine was under British control which was 'a challenge and a menace to other nations'. He hoped that Arabs and Jews could unite to overthrow British imperialism.[123] In the wake of the Palestinian general strike and revolt of 1936-9, the British LAI reiterated its strong support for the demands of the Arab nationalist movement.[124]

The International Bureau of Revolutionary Socialist Unity: 1932-1939

Unlike the LSI and the LAI, which both took proactive stances on either side of the debate on Zionism, the IBSRU in which the ILP was a major player, was essentially reactive. Despite being established in 1932, the organisation did not initially formulate a 'revolutionary

[120] Hen-Tov, *Communism and Zionism*, p. 48.
[121] IISH, LAI microfilm, 130 'Appeal Against the Imperialist Terror in Palestine', 1929, p. 1.
[122] Ibid., p. 2.
[123] 'Tools of British Imperialism: The Jewish Function in Palestine', *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 January 1932.
[124] 'League Against Imperialism, Sixth Annual Conference 27th and 28th February 1937, Resolution on Palestine', p. 2. DBN 25/1.

socialist' position on Palestine and it was not until the Palestinian Arab revolt of April 1936 that it moved to devise a comprehensive policy. In June 1936, the IBRSU held a 'Symposium on Palestine'. This symposium featured contributions from a number of diverse, even conflicting perspectives. These debates are of interest as the discussions provide an indication of the kind of ideas arguments which the ILP leadership engaged in while formulating its own Palestine policy. Furthermore, the reports illustrate the deeply contested nature of the Palestine conflict amongst those who aligned themselves to the revolutionary socialist movement in the interwar period. At this point, the IBRSU contained within it the anti-Zionist Polish Bund as well as several Palestine based Labour Zionist organisations such as the Left *Poale Zion* which although not formally affiliated, had contacts with the IBRSU through Brockway who served as secretary.[125]

The first piece of commentary was supplied by an unnamed 'Jewish Socialist of Polish descent'.[126] This individual, who had been active in the labour movement in Palestine from 1927 until late 1935, produced a lengthy anti-Zionist case. First, it was argued that a Jewish state could only be a solution to the problems faced by European Jews if it included 'at least the majority of Jews within its bounds'. Therefore, given the size of Palestine and its increasing Arab population, it was argued that to create such a state it would be necessary not only to exclude the Palestinian Arabs, but also to expand its territories into Transjordan. Consequently, according to this view, the logic of Zionism inevitably meant 'a national struggle against the Arab people'. The second objection was that Zionist aims could only succeed if they became 'agents of an Imperialist World Power'. Therefore, the author argued that all Zionists, including socialists, were in effect, 'agents of British Imperialism'. Furthermore, problematically for revolutionaries, it was deemed impossible for socialists in Palestine to be both revolutionary and Zionist. Instead, socialist Zionists could only be reformist because the foundation of the Jewish state 'must be carried out in a Capitalist way'.[127]

In addition, the claim was made that because Zionists formed a minority in Palestine, in order to achieve their political ambition, they had to 'oppose all fundamental social reforms' and

[125] *A Lead to World Socialism: Report of Revolutionary Socialist Congress Brussels, October 31-November 2nd, 1936* (London, 1936), p. 3. Left *Poale Zion* was also referred to as the Palestine Workers' Party. See 'Palestine Workers' Party', *New Leader*, 17 February 1939.
[126] 'The Case Against Zionism', *Revolutionary Socialist Bulletin*, June 1936, pp. 10-12.
[127] Ibid.

'resist democratic representation of the people'. Therefore, instead of Zionist immigration having a positive effect, winning Arab workers to socialist ideas, the author maintained that it had instead produced a 'reactionary effect' upon the Arab population, as it encouraged the peasants, workers, and the middle class to form a 'United Front' with the 'reactionary Effendis'.[128]

In response to the argument that the Zionists had introduced progress into Palestine, the writer demonstrated that he perceived Zionism as a form of imperialism. The report stated: 'Mussolini also introduces progress in Abyssinia. All Imperialisms brings progress in some way – should we therefore become pro-Imperialist?'. Moreover, it was argued that other Arab states such as Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Persia had all demonstrated 'progressive development' without Zionist immigration. Furthermore, even if it were true that Palestinian Arabs had benefited and continued to benefit from Zionist immigration, it was not deemed credible, given the 'powerful' national movements in Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Iraq, that the Palestinian Arabs 'awakening to nationalism', would 'sell their national feeling… for material profit'.[129]

Contrary to the claims of Labour Zionism and its supporters, the contributor declared that the only class to significantly profit from Zionist immigration was not the workers but 'the aristocratic Effendis', while for the Arab workers 'misery and distress' still existed 'much the same as fifteen years ago'. However, it was conceded that there were some 'exceptional cases' to which the Zionists had 'repeatedly brought attention'. It was acknowledged that 'new possibilities of employment' had been created and that wages had risen, although not dramatically. However, it was claimed the Zionists had adopted ethnically exclusive slogans such as 'Seize Work' and 'Jews Buy Jewish Goods' and had made 'assault upon the workplaces occupied by Arabs'.[130] Here, the activities of the *Histadrut* were severely criticised. The report claimed that in Jaffa, when the government had announced a new construction project, the contract was given to a firm belonging to the *Histadrut*, 'which was able to underbid the estimates of the Arabs through a subsidy from the general funds'.

[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid.

Therefore, the *Histadrut*, with its cooperatives and colonies was able to function as 'a powerful trading monopoly'.[131]

The proposed solution was first and foremost to 'intensify' the struggle against capitalism which was 'the root of [Jewish] misfortune'. The second obligation for socialists was to struggle for an 'opening to territories in which Jews can be given an opportunity of living without interfering with others'. Thirdly, financial support should be given to such territories as Birobidzhan, which it was believed could be expanded by financial assistance. The Jewish population already settled in Palestine could 'remain there as an acknowledged minority'. Instead of a Jewish state, the political aim of revolutionary socialists in Palestine should be what was termed 'a Workers' and Peasants' Republic of Greater Syria within the bounds of an Arabian Federation'. Unlike the prevailing perspective within mainstream Labour, here, the historic connection between Jews and Palestine was completely rejected and Zionism was deemed to be a wholly unrealistic enterprise:

> Some will point to the ''historical rights'' of the Jews in Palestine. We refuse to accept this. Were the world to be re-modelled on the lines of 2,000 years ago, what a gigantic migration there would be… Zionism cannot succeed. Amidst an awakening national colonial movement, in an age of collapsing Capitalism, in the face of the approaching world war, Zionism is a fantasy.[132]

The author's concluding remarks drew attention to the relationship between colonial nationalism and socialists. It was argued that the European left 'rarely possess(ed)… the trust of colonial peoples'. As such, socialists should recognise the 'disturbing fact' that while previously national independence movements had been influenced by the ideas of the French Revolution and later had looked to the Soviet Union, it was now apparent that 'Japan and Hitler are greatly respected by the colonial peoples'.[133] Therefore, rather than using this as a reason to reject Arab nationalism in favour of Labour Zionism, the author argued that this should be a 'warning to Socialists' that they must support anti-colonial nationalist movements.[134]

[131] Ibid.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid.

The second report to the symposium, which came from the Left *Poale Zion*, contained an altogether different analysis. As Lockman has noted, the ILP leadership had 'developed close ties' with the group's leading figures Abramovitch and Yitzhaki .[135] Like the mainstream *Poale Zion*, the left-wing faction argued that the general strike to stop Jewish immigration was not a genuine strike, and even claimed that 'representatives of the Arab labourers' had submitted a letter of protest to the organisers of the strike.[136] Therefore, they declared that the strike had 'little sympathy' among the Arab masses. For Left *Poale Zion,* this episode was 'easily explained' by the considerably improved economic conditions of the Arab masses as a result of Zionist immigration. Furthermore, so the argument went, because Labour Zionists were spreading trade union and socialist ideas and thus creating class consciousness within the Arab working class; the ruling class had been driven to stop Zionist immigration, in order to 'impede the wakening of the Arab labourer, and to slacken the speed of progress in the country'. Furthermore, it was alleged that in this the Arab ruling class had 'joined with the activities of the Nazi agents, who are interested in strengthening anti-Jewish propaganda in Palestine'.[137] Moreover, according to Left *Poale Zion,* this development also had the 'sympathy of the Imperialist government', which was determined to slow down the pace of economic and social developments that Jewish immigration had apparently brought.[138]

The third statement was received from *Hashomer Hatzair*, a Marxist-Zionist group which advocated a binational solution.[139] Similarly, it claimed that those responsible for 'the recent anti-Jewish riots in Palestine' were 'the most reactionary' Arab nationalist parties, which were 'composed entirely of feudal and religious lords'. These forces were opposed to Zionist immigration because of its 'modernising and progressive effect' on the economic and social conditions in Palestine, which was challenging the ruling class' power over 'the dark masses of the illiterate Arab population'.[140] As before, Arab nationalism was deemed to be fascistic in character because 'the idea of the 'National Front' in the Fascist sense' was increasingly 'dominating a large section of the Arab population'. Similarly, according to *Hashomer Hatzair*, the mainstream Zionist labour movement was increasingly 'subordinating its Socialist principles to the idea of a Jewish National Front'. Therefore, it was the

[135] Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*, p. 250.
[136] 'The Jewish and Arab Workers', *Revolutionary Socialist Bulletin*, June 1936, p. 13.
[137] Ibid., p. 13.
[138] Ibid., p. 14.
[139] Rafael Medoff and Chaim I. Waxman, *Historical Dictionary of Zionism* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 77-78.
[140] 'Policy of British Imperialism', *Revolutionary Socialist Bulletin*, June 1936, p. 14.

'unpardonable neglect' of the *Histadrut* with regard to organising the Arab workers which had prevented the creation of 'a real United Front of Jewish and Arab workers'.[141]

In October 1936, having received these various reports, as well as a brief statement from the Palestine Arab Workers' Society (PAWS), the ILP Palestine commission comprising of Maxton, Brockway, McGovern and Stephen published its policy statement. It rejected the rationale for Zionism but recognised that Palestine could serve as a refuge for Jews who were being persecuted in Central and Eastern Europe. According to the report, the solution lay in the creation of new political and industrial organisations which were interracial and operated upon an independent working-class basis.[142] The IBRSU then convened a congress in Brussels at which a resolution was passed which denounced the British government's decision to increase its military presence in Palestine and reaffirmed the ILP commission's policy.[143]

However, after visiting Palestine just a few months later, in a visit facilitated by the leaders of Left *Poale Zion*, both McGovern and Stephen returned as vocal champions of Zionism on the grounds of its socialist achievements.[144] An account of the visit was provided by Yigael Gluckstein who would later found the Trotskyist group the International Socialists as Tony Cliff. In his memoirs, Cliff who at this point was a member of the youth section of the Left *Poale Zion* recalled attending meetings in Jerusalem and Haifa during McGovern and Stephen's tour.[145]

Under Brockway's editorship, the *New Leader* was a forum where these debates continued to be played out as Mansur of the PAWS and Orenstein of *Hashomer Hatzair* contributed articles outlining their varying perspectives. Therefore, the ILP, and particularly Brockway as its chief foreign policymaker, faced a dilemma. Given the complexities of the situation in Palestine he argued that socialists must 'apply their principles in a new way'.[146] Brockway

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[141] Ibid.
[142] 'Socialist Policy in Palestine: Report of the ILP Commission', *Revolutionary Socialist Bulletin*, October 1936, pp. 17-18.
[143] *A Lead to World Socialism: Report of Revolutionary Socialist Congress Brussels, October 31-November 2nd, 1936* (London, 1936), p. 30.
[144] Brockway, *Inside the Left*, p. 291.
[145] Tony Cliff, *A World to Win: Life of a Revolutionary* (London, 2000), pp. 16-17. Cliff incorrectly gives the date of McGovern and Stephen's visit as 1938.
[146] Brockway, 'Socialist View of Palestine', *New Leader*, 25 November 1938; Also see Brockway, 'Preface' in Mordekhay Orenstein, *Palestine: A Plea for Jewish-Arab Unity* (London, 1939), pp. 3-7.

maintained that neither the communist left's support for Arab nationalism nor the LSI's support for Zionism was the appropriate position. Instead, he continued to advocate the creation of new joint Arab and Jewish working-class organisations which would challenge British imperialism and the bourgeois elements with both the Arab and Jewish population in Palestine. Significantly however, for several reasons, Brockway rejected the idea that Zionism itself could be equated to imperialism. Firstly, in his view, unlike classic imperialism, the Zionists were not exploiting Palestine.[147] Secondly, the Jews in Palestine were not an insignificant minority but formed two fifths of the population and importantly, the majority of the Jews in Palestine were working-class.[148] Furthermore, Brockway argued that because industrial workers were central to achieving social revolution and Jewish workers constituted the vast majority of Palestine's industrial working-class, then Zionist immigration acted in an anti-imperialist way.[149]

The existing transnational networks were integral to the ILP's attempts to contribute towards a resolution to the conflict in Palestine. After securing the endorsement of the Palestine Workers' Party for the ILP's policy, which had now formally affiliated to the IBRSU, Brockway then worked closely with its secretary Itz'haki to translate this 'paper policy' into something concrete.[150] Brockway recalled in his memoirs that Iz'hakhi became 'such a familiar figure in my rooms… that one particular chair… seems incomplete without him now'.[151] As we have seen in chapter two, this effort began with the issuing of a statement by the ILP calling for Arab Jewish unity on a class basis and the creation of a new socialist party.[152] A further development was the creation of the British-based organisation 'The Socialist Committee for Arab Jewish Workers' Unity in Palestine', chaired by Maxton.[153] Meanwhile, the Palestine Workers' Party set up similar forums in Palestine which sought to bring together Jewish and Arab workers and intellectuals, and distributed thousands of copies of the ILP's statement in both Arabic and Hebrew.[154] Ambitious plans were also made to

[147] Brockway, 'Socialist View of Palestine', *New Leader*, 25 November 1938.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Brockway, *Inside the Left*, p. 292.
[151] Ibid.
[152] 'Socialists Call for Arab Jewish Peace', *JTA*, 26 May 1939. The statement was first published in the *New Leader*, see 'A Call to the Workers and Peasants of Palestine', *New Leader*, 26 May 1939.
[153] 'Jewish Arab Workers' Unity: ILP Forms a British Committee', *New Leader*, 16 June 1939; 'Britain Bars Jew As Major of Jerusalem', *JTA*, 23 June 1939.
[154] 'Socialists Call for Arab Jewish Peace', *JTA*, 26 May 1939.

convene a conference in Palestine which aimed to bring together Jewish and Arab socialists not only from Palestine but also from neighbouring countries, as well as India.[155]

Conclusion

As far as the ILP were concerned, deliberations within transnational forums illustrated early divisions which had not been as apparent at a national level. While figures such as MacDonald and Wedgwood enthusiastically promoted Zionism, others, mainly Jewish figures in the LSI expressed reservations. The first conference of the British Commonwealth Labour in 1925 saw opposition to Labour Zionism, which had not been expressed at Labour Party or ILP conferences.

From the late 1920s, the ILP's inability to work out a consistent policy was indicative of its political isolation in the international arena. The leadership's decision to pursue a line apparently sympathetic to anti-colonial nationalism was met with disapproval by the LSI. However, its refusal to strongly condemn the Labour government's response to the outbreak of violence in August 1929 contributed towards its leadership's removal from the LAI and fierce attacks by the communist left and some anti-colonial nationalists. Its efforts in the early 1930s to convince the LSI to recognise the legitimacy of the Arab nationalist struggle ended in failure and criticism. The party's subsequent attempts to promote its 'revolutionary socialist' position which ultimately rejected Zionism but accepted the necessity of Jewish immigration into Palestine proved challenging. Soon after, two of its leading figures broke ranks and unequivocally supported Zionism and the party's strategy of creating new working-class organisations in Palestine failed to materialise.

To conclude, it is evident that during the interwar years the nature of and solution to the Palestine conflict were profoundly contested issues. It did not merely cause intense disagreement between the social democratic and communist left, but also created significant internal divisions within these movements. An analysis of the debate at a transnational level demonstrates the importance of ideas regarding internationalism in informing attitudes towards Palestine. Central to these discussions were questions such as the nature of imperialism and colonialism, the concept of national self-determination and immigration.

[155] Brockway, *Inside the Left*, p. 292.

Furthermore, the evolution of the ILP's Palestine policy during 1936-9 was clearly influenced by its transnational connections and its hopes for implementing its policy of creating unity between Arabs and Jews in Palestine on a class basis rested on the development of transnational networks.

Chapter 4: Labour, the ILP and League of Nations Mandates

In the aftermath of the First World War, the Covenant of the League of Nations was drawn up, which formalised the creation of the League and set out the organisation's structures and objectives. Article 22 of the League's Covenant spoke of 'peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world' whose 'well-being and development' were 'a sacred trust of civilisation'.[1] These territories were to become 'mandates' which would be administered by a western mandatory power on behalf of the League. Palestine was deemed to be one of those former Ottoman territories whose 'existence as an independent nation' could be 'provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone'.[2] Furthermore, Article 22 stipulated that a permanent commission was to be established, to which mandatory powers were obliged to report on an annual basis and which would advise the League Council. Thus, in late 1920, the Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC) was established.[3]

Recent scholarship has challenged the interpretation that mandates were a mere continuation of imperialism. Michael D. Callahan has argued that previous historians had either misunderstood or underestimated the significance of the mandates system.[4] According to Callahan, mandates had received 'almost no systematic scholarly attention' and as such the idea that mandates differed only in name from other colonial possessions was an assertion not backed up by the historical evidence.[5] Fundamentally, imperial powers understood that mandates were not simply colonies and moreover, the existence of the mandates system was a 'permanent reminder' of the anti-imperialist and humanitarian condemnation' of European colonialism.[6] While accepting that the PMC was 'not a fierce critic of colonialism and had no intention of demolishing Europe's empires', Callahan advanced the argument that the PMC

[1] See 'Appendix 1: Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations', in Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 408-9.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society in the 1920s*, p. 37.
[4] Michael D. Callahan, *A Sacred Trust: The League of Nations and Africa 1929-46* (Brighton, 2004), p. 2.
[5] Ibid., p. 2.
[6] Michael D. Callahan, ''Mandated Territories Are Not Colonies'': Britain, France and Africa in the 1930s' in R. M. Douglas, Michael D. Callahan and Elizabeth Bishop (eds.), *Imperialism on Trial: International Oversight of Colonial Rule in Historical Perspective* (Oxford, 2006), p. 13.

'through informal connections' and 'the implied threat of international criticism' did in fact impact upon 'every level of European imperial rule'.[7]

Susan Pedersen has maintained that the mandates system 'certainly aimed at legitimating and prolonging imperial rule'.[8] However, she has concluded that the PMC proved 'less docile and more disruptive than its framers intended' as although the majority of its members were former colonial officials, these members were often 'eager to expose abuses or cause difficulties for other imperial powers'.[9] Furthermore, the PMC's published records and reports made it 'a magnet' for those wishing to challenge the rule of the mandatory power.[10] Pedersen has argued that the legacy of mandates was not more 'enlightened' form of rule or higher levels of development. Rather, the true significance of the mandate system was that it displaced 'some amount of conflict' over non-consensual rule into 'the international realm'.[11] This was used strategically by both imperial powers and nationalist movements. Additionally, Pedersen has stressed that there was considerable variation in the ways in which different powers governed mandates.[12]

The arrangement embodied in the mandates system was advocated by Labour prior to the creation of the League. Labour's war aims memorandum of December 1917, the party's first comprehensive statement on the post-war international order, stated that territories in the Ottoman Empire such as Mesopotamia and 'Arabia' should neither be returned to Ottoman rule nor controlled by victorious imperial powers 'as instruments of exploitation or militarism'.[13] Instead, it insisted that if these nations were deemed unable to 'settle their own destinies', the territories should be placed under the administration of 'a commission acting under the authority of the super-national authority or League of Nations'.[14] Palestine was envisioned as 'a free state, under international guarantee' in which Jews could 'work out their own salvation'.[15]

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[7] Ibid., p. 21.
[8] Susan Pedersen, 'The Impact of League Oversight on British Policy in Palestine' in Rory Miller (ed.), *Britain Palestine and Empire: The Mandate Years* (Farnham, 2010), p. 40.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Pedersen, 'The Meaning of Mandates: An Argument', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 32 (2006), p. 582.
[12] Ibid., p. 564.
[13] Labour Party and Trades Union Congress, *Memorandum on War Aims* (London, 1917), p. 13.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.

Accordingly, when the leaders of the great powers met at San Remo in April 1920, the Labour leadership urged the British representatives to accept the Palestine mandate, (which had been under British control since the summer of 1918), 'with a view to the country's reconstruction as a national home for the Jews'.[16] The outcome of the conference was to designate both Palestine and Mesopotamia as 'A' status mandates under British rule and draft mandates were drawn up in December 1920.[17] Immediately after the San Remo conference, pro-Zionist Labour MPs Josiah C. Wedgwood and Ben Spoor pressed the government to replace the military administration with a civil administration so that the Jewish national home policy could be pursued 'without delay'.[18] As the Labour leadership had hoped, the Balfour Declaration was incorporated into the text of the Palestine mandate.[19] Hence, the preamble stated that 'the Mandatory should be responsible for putting into effect the declaration originally made… by the Government of His Britannic Majesty in favour of the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, it being clearly understood that nothing should be done which might prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine'.[20] Furthermore, several of the mandate's articles referred to the specific ways in which the Jewish national home policy would be practically implemented.[21]

On 24 July 1922, the Council of the League of Nations officially conferred the Palestine mandate to Britain, which finally came into force in late September 1923.[22] It is worth noting the clear contradiction in designating Palestine a category 'A' mandate, given that these mandates were those supposedly deemed most prepared for self-government.[23] After all, any genuine political independence for Palestine unquestionably would have seriously jeopardized the nascent Zionist project. Therefore, if the British government were to fulfil the terms of the mandate and facilitate the creation of a Jewish national home, it could not realistically consider creating genuinely democratic institutions or granting independence in the near future. This was acknowledged by the PMC in one of its first sessions after the

[16] 'Palestine, British Mandate Urged', *West Australian*, 26 April 1920.
[17] Zara S. Steiner, *The Lights That Failed: European International History 1919-1933* (Oxford, 2005), p. 105.
[18] H.C. Deb., 29 April 1920, vol. 128, col. 1397.
[19] Rory Miller, 'Introduction' in Miller (ed.), *Britain, Palestine and Empire*, p. 3.
[20] *League of Nations Mandate for Palestine Together With a Note by the Secretary General Relating to its Application to the Territory Known as Trans-Jordan Under the Provisions of Article 25* (London, 1922) Cmd. 1785.
[21] See, for example Articles 2, 4, 6 and 11 in *Ibid*.
[22] Miller, 'Introduction' in *Britain, Palestine and Empire*, p. 3
[23] Steiner, *Lights That Failed*, p. 105.

mandate came into force. The commission observed that while the Palestinian Arabs were correct to assert that Article 2 of the mandate guaranteed the development of self-governing institutions, 'the Administration could not agree to the admission of a majority resolved to oppose the establishment of a Jewish National Home'.[24]

Debates within the Labour movement on the Palestine Mandate and the Mandates system, 1918-1924

In the years immediately following the First World War, many voices in the ILP were critical of the mandates system in the former Ottoman Empire. Concerning Britain's administration of Mesopotamia, for example, an ILP pamphlet of 1921 completely rejected any claims of benevolence and instead viewed mandates as a continuation of conventional imperialism, concluding that 'Mandate is indeed merely a respectable name for annexation'.[25] MacDonald's response was not to reject the mandates system but rather to argue that only under socialist government could 'the idea underlying the mandates… be carried out'.[26] As far he was concerned, socialists could not 'refuse responsibility for the weaker peoples known as the native races'.[27]

Regarding Palestine, concerns were raised about the deployment of former members of the 'Black and Tans', a notorious British army unit which a Labour party commission had condemned for its brutality during the Anglo-Irish war.[28] An article in the *New Leader* described them as 'waiting for trouble' and complained that 'they are expensive, and we pay for them!'.[29] This was soon responded to by Israel Cohen of the World Zionist Organisation, who claimed that the article had expressed 'remarkable ignorance' and a 'reckless disregard of the responsibilities involved in the mandate conferred upon Great Britain by the Council of the League of Nations'.[30] Furthermore, questions were raised as to whether Britain was fulfilling the terms of the mandate in regard to preparing the country for self-government. In July 1923, after the creation of a legislative council had been abandoned, Labour MP for Blaydon William Whiteley enquired in parliament into the number of officials appointed to

[24] PMC Minutes, 5th Session, p. 188.
[25] George Horwill, *Oil and Finance in Turkey, Persia and Mesopotamia* (London, 1921), p. 12. LSE Archive, ILP Pamphlets, ILP/5/1921/5.
[26] Ramsay MacDonald, *Socialism: Critical and Constructive* (London, 1921), p. 252.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Richard Bennett, *The Black and Tans* (London, 2001), p. 151.
[29] 'The World We Live In', *New Leader*, 15 December 1922.
[30] 'Labour and Palestine', *New Leader*, 29 December 1922.

the advisory council who were 'natives of Palestine'.[31] Others, however, for instance Wedgwood, were opposed to the extension of self-government based on the belief that it would put the Jewish minority population at risk.[32] When a correspondent to the *New Leader* raised the issue, Brailsford was unsympathetic, attributing the lack of political representation to the decision of Palestinian Arabs to boycott the Legislative Council.[33]

Labour's official policy reaffirmed Britain's commitment as the mandatory power in Palestine. In late 1922, Arthur Henderson insisted that Labour had 'no sympathy with those who would abandon the responsibility of Palestine, which the British government voluntarily assumed before the whole world and which have been defined in the Mandate'.[34] According to Henderson, this duty had to be fulfilled, in order to ensure the 'economic prosperity, political autonomy and spiritual freedom of both the Arabs and the Jews'.[35] Thus, from this perspective, committing to the mandate was an expression of internationalism as it was carrying out a policy on behalf on the international community. Labour's intervention was also significant because there was a genuine possibility at this time that Britain's pro-Zionist policy could have been reversed or significantly modified.[36] Under Brailsford editorship, the *New Leader* endorsed the official Labour party policy, stating ahead of the 1922 general election that 'the promise to the Jews must be kept' .[37]

As discussed in the previous chapters, many leading Labourites, including parliamentarians such as Ramsay MacDonald and Emile Vandervelde, and prominent intellectuals like George Bernard Shaw and R. H. Tawney, all visited Palestine to observe first-hand the development of the Zionist project.[38] In addition to being the site for the development of the Jewish national home, Palestine was also of interest due to its status as a British mandate. MacDonald's reports from Palestine discussed the British administration there, speaking favourably of the High Commissioner Herbert Samuel. MacDonald was an enthusiastic

[31] 'The Palestine Administration', *Jewish Chronicle*, 20 July 1923.
[32] H.C. Deb., 9 March 1922, vol. 151, cols. 181-3.
[33] Letters to the Editor: 'Jews and Arabs in Palestine', *New Leader*, 1 May 1925.
[34] 'Palestine for the Jews: Labour's Advocacy', *Northern Star NSW*, 3 November 1922. Henderson's statement was issued on 27 October 1922, see English Zionist Federation, *British Opinion and the Jewish National Home* (London, 1922), n.p.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Sahar Huneidi, *A Broken Trust: Sir Herbert Samuel, Zionism and the Palestinians* (London, 2001), p. 48.
[37] See Brailsford's editorial notes 'Labour and Palestine', *New Leader*, 29 December 1922.
[38] 'Part Played by Labor in the Rebuilding of Palestine Extolled', *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 21 May 1929; 'Bernard Shaw Visits', *JTA*, 18 March 1931. For Tawney's visit to Palestine see Lawrence Goldman, *The Life of R.H. Tawney: Socialism and History* (London, 2013), p. 146.

advocate of British officials possessing a political, rather than a military background, and thus he believed that Palestine was 'fortunate' as Samuel had been 'trained in politics'.[39] Moreover, according to MacDonald, Samuel was proving 'true to his Liberal principles' and 'handling a delicate position with tact and patience'.[40] Therefore, Samuel's leadership did much to account for MacDonald's optimism that in due course, there could be a resolution to the situation in Palestine.[41]

Another first-hand observer was Ethel Snowden, a leading feminist, socialist, pacifist and wife of Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Snowden.[42] She visited Palestine in early 1923 and upon her return, gave a lecture for the Zionist organisation *Keren Hayesod*, before publishing an account of her experiences in a lengthy article in the *Empire Review*.[43] Responding to British press reports questioning her objectivity, Snowden insisted that she had produced an impartial and in-depth study of the situation in Palestine based upon interviews with 200 people.[44] Snowden's account repeatedly commended the British administration in Palestine, presenting British efforts in Palestine as wholly benevolent. Like MacDonald, Snowden praised the High Commissioner Samuel and claimed that the British administration had 'accomplished marvels in the improvement of the social condition of Palestine'.[45] These included significant improvements in areas such as public sanitation, infrastructure, the education system, agriculture and industry.[46] Yet, in her appraisal of Samuel, Snowden cannot be regarded an objective observer given that she was hosted by the Samuels for the duration of her stay in Palestine.[47] Like MacDonald, Snowden was given a tour of some of the Jewish settlements by Labour Zionist activists. Indeed, one of her guides was the future Prime Minister of Israel, Golda Meir.[48] However, unlike MacDonald, Snowden expressed some criticisms of the Zionist movement and even levelled mild criticism

[39] MacDonald, 'New Wine in Old Bottles', *Forward*, 18 March 1922.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] For details of Ethel Snowden's political career see June Hannam, 'Ethel Snowden', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press 2004; online edn. October 2009.
[43] 'Mrs Snowden on Palestine', *Jewish Chronicle*, 20 July 1923.
[44] Ethel Snowden, 'Palestine Under the Mandate', *The Empire Review*, vol. 39, April 1924, p. 392.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid., pp. 392-393. For a discussion of Samuel's tenure as High Commissioner see Elie Kedourie, 'Sir Herbert Samuel and the Government of Palestine', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 5 (January 1969), pp. 44-68.
[47] 'The Week', *Jewish Chronicle*, 6 April 1923.
[48] Meron Medzini, *Golda Meir: A Political Biography* (Tel-Aviv, 2008), p. 36.

at the Labour Zionist movement, believing that leading figures such as Ben-Gurion should adopt a less critical attitude toward the British administration.[49]

In Snowden's interpretation of the terms of the mandate, Britain had a duty to permit Jewish immigration into Palestine to ensure the creation of a Jewish national home but 'not a dominant Jewish power in Palestine'. Instead, she envisioned the creation of a 'gradually to-be-democratised Palestinian State' in which both Jews and Arabs would cooperate and enjoy 'full and equal electoral rights'.[50] In her view, this was the policy which had been endorsed by the League of Nations and which the British government was attempting to pursue. Snowden claimed that the widespread Palestinian Arab boycott of elections for the proposed legislative assembly was not an indication of deep-seated Palestinian Arab resentment vis-à-vis British rule, but stemmed from of a combination of apathy and a belief that an elected assembly would not bring about 'better government or better protection of their interests'. Essentialising Palestinian Arabs as 'fanatical' and 'backward', Snowden concluded that the attempt to create an elected legislative assembly had been 'too large a step in democracy' and that the decision to revert to an unelected advisory council had been correct.[51]

In a scathing critique of Palestinian Arab nationalism, she charged Palestinian Arab culture with anti-feminism and anti-Semitism. Furthermore, Snowden contended that the Arab ruling elite objected to the British mandate not primarily on the grounds of Britain's commitment to the creation of a Jewish national home, but because the mandatory authorities sought to prevent the exploitation of Arab workers and peasants and had insisted upon the payment of taxes.[52] She expressed her disapproval that despite Britain's 'liberation' of Palestine from Ottoman rule, social improvements and its 'promise of eventual self-government', she could not find 'the slightest trace of gratitude'.

Snowden concluded her article by emphasising the necessity of continued British presence in Palestine. Firstly, she contended that British withdrawal from Palestine would inevitably lead to a 'moral disaster' and a 'material loss' for the British empire. British interests would be jeopardised as the Suez Canal would be at the 'tender mercies' of another imperial power

[49] Snowden, 'Palestine Under the Mandate', p. 402.
[50] Ibid., p. 394.
[51] Ibid., p. 395.
[52] Ibid., p. 400.

such as France or Italy who would then assume the mandate. Secondly, it would also endanger the Jewish population of Palestine as the subsequent 'lawlessness' resulting from British withdrawal would mean 'martyrdom for the Jews who trusted us'. Thirdly, Snowden, who was active in the pacifist movement, contended that the continuation of the British mandate was 'the best guarantee of peace' in the region.[53] Finally, she emphasised the internationalist dimension of British involvement in Palestine, asserting that Palestine was 'the proud possession of mankind' and therefore, 'whoever builds up its life does so for the [human] race'.[54]

The First Labour Government, 1924

During the early 1920s, Labour continued its electoral rise. The 1922 general election saw Labour become the official opposition for the first time and in January 1924, Labour formed its first government, with MacDonald leading a minority administration. ILPers held key cabinet posts and constituted a considerable proportion of the PLP. 45 ILP-sponsored MPs were elected and 120 Labour MPs out of a total of 190 held membership of the ILP.[55] Labour taking office resulted in a party which self-identified as 'anti-imperialist' being tasked with administering the British empire at its height. It has been argued that once in power, Labour pursued a policy of continuity in imperial matters.[56] The first Labour government's administration of Britain's League of Nations mandates certainly supports this view. For instance, the machinery of government remained intact. British mandates continued to be the responsibility of the colonial office and on the ground, mandates continued to be managed by a high commissioner.

There was, however, a minor change in terms of interacting with the Permanent Mandates Commission. In the first session of the PMC held during 1924, Britain was represented by William Ormsby-Gore, a Conservative MP who had been the under-secretary of State for the Colonies until Labour's election victory.[57] However, in the second session of that year, Britain was represented by Herbert Samuel, who had been a senior member of Asquith's Liberal government, and had served as High Commissioner for Palestine since 1 July 1920.

[53] Ibid., p. 403.
[54] Ibid.
[55] John Shepherd and Keith Laybourn, *Britain's First Labour Government* (London, 2013), p. 138.
[56] John Shepherd, 'A Gentleman at the Foreign Office: Influences Shaping Ramsay MacDonald's Internationalism in 1924' in Paul Corthorn and Jonathan Davis (eds.), *The British Labour Party and the Wider World: Domestic Politics, Internationalism and Foreign Policy* (London, 2008), p. 44.
[57] PMC Minutes, 4th Session, p. 88.

He gave a detailed report covering issues such as local government, education, taxation.[58] As we have seen, MacDonald was evidently an admirer of Samuel's political abilities.[59] It appears that the decision to send Samuel as Britain's accredited representative was influenced by the attitude of other mandatory powers towards the PMC. During a League of Nations committee meeting in September 1924, Charles Roden Buxton commented that South Africa had set an 'excellent example' by sending 'the high official actually in charge of the administration of their mandated territory'. This policy, he argued, 'should be followed as often as possible by the other mandatory powers'.[60]

Fundamentally, Labour did not seek to alter Britain's administration of Palestine from the policy which it had inherited. As contemporary press reports noted, several members of the cabinet, including MacDonald and Snowden, were on record as supporting the creation of a Jewish national home and although initially there had been some uncertainty over colonial secretary J. H. Thomas' views regarding Palestine, Labour 'was not expected to advance any modifications'.[61] When the cabinet met in late February 1924, it agreed to re-affirm the Balfour Declaration and agreed to authorise a loan to Palestine, a policy which had also been under consideration by the previous Conservative government.[62] A few days later, Thomas relayed this decision to the House of Commons, and emphasised that the policy was 'embodied in the Mandate for Palestine which was approved by the League of Nations'.[63] As Ormsby-Gore informed the PMC, the precise definition of what was meant by creating a Jewish national home in Palestine had been 'adopted by Mr. Lloyd George's Government and reaffirmed by the governments of Mr. Baldwin and Mr. MacDonald'.[64]

However, there were some tentative attempts to reform the mechanisms by which mandates and colonies were governed. Representing Britain in the League's Political Questions committee, Roden Buxton praised the work of the PMC, but called for measures that could

[58] PMC Minutes, 5th Session, p. 55.
[59] MacDonald, 'New Wine in Old Bottles', *Forward*, 18 March 1922.
[60] Minutes of the Sixth Committee (Political Questions), 16 September 1924, p. 14. Buxton was a prominent ILPer who was twice elected to parliament in the 1920s. See C. V. J. Griffiths, 'Buxton, Charles Roden (1875–1942)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, first published 2004; online edn, October 2006.
[61] 'No Change in British Palestine Policy', *JTA*, 13 Feb 1924.
[62] Cabinet Minutes, 21 February 1924, p. 9, CAB 23/147. On the loan for Palestine, see Michael J. Cohen, *Britain's Moment in Palestine: Retrospect and Perspectives 1917-1948* (Oxford, 2014), p. 172.
[63] H.C. Deb., 25 February 1924, vol. 170, cols. 62-3.
[64] PMC Minutes, 4th Session, p. 87.

increase its effectiveness. For instance, he called on it to better publicise its activities.[65] More significantly, Buxton also advocated that in future, the PMC should set out general principles which could then be adopted by all states with colonial territories, not just mandatory powers. However, senior figures in the PMC were extremely cautious about the prospect of extending the remit of the PMC. Portugal's Alfredo Freire d'Andrade argued that the PMC must act with 'the greatest prudence and not even appear to interfere in the internal affairs of colonial powers'.[66] Similarly, Fridtjof Nansen – the League's High Commissioner for Refugees – stressed that the commission had to be 'very careful' as its task was limited 'namely to supervise the administration of the mandated territories'.[67] Ultimately, therefore, the request proved unsuccessful.

Developing a Mandates Policy, 1924-1929

In October 1924, Labour fell from office after losing a *de facto* vote of no confidence and suffering defeat at the subsequent general election.[68] Despite this brief experience in government, there was still a distinct lack of consensus regarding its policy for mandates. In 1925, *The Book of the Labour Party* was published – a three-volume work consisting of a series of articles comprehensively outlining various aspects of Labour's programme, authored by its leading policymakers. It also served as a defence of the record of the first Labour government and contained glowing biographical accounts of its parliamentary leadership as well as other prominent figures in the British labour movement.[69] C. Delisle Burns' chapter on 'The British Commonwealth of Nations', which dealt with mandated territories, was ambiguous and noted that:

> As for the A Mandates Irak and Palestine, the position is too unstable for a full statement of Labour policy here… We are not likely to retain direct British power for much longer; but the whole situation in the Near East seems at the moment to be fluid. There is (sic.) no detailed applications of principle into his matter which would be generally accepted by all sections of Labour.[70]

[65] Ibid.
[66] Records of the Fifth Assembly, Meetings of the Committees, Minutes of the Sixth Committee (Political Questions), 16 September 1924, *League of Nations Official Journal*, Special Supplement No. 29, p. 14.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Shepherd and Laybourn, *Britain's First Labour Government*, p. 175 and p. 184.
[69] Herbert Tracey (ed.), *The Book of the Labour Party: Its History, Growth, Policy and Leaders*, vols. I - III (London, 1925).
[70] C. Delisle Burns, 'The British Commonwealth of Nations', *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 85.

Burns' assessment regarding a lack of consensus was borne out in the Labour press. When in April 1925, Brailsford wrote an editorial note in the *New Leader* praising the Zionist movement, it resulted in an exchange with a correspondent who maintained the view that Zionism had resulted in Palestinian Arab dispossession and that under the mandate 'the people of Palestine' had been 'deprived of every shred' of political liberty and self-government.[71]

Some in the ILP were strident critics of the first Labour government's administration of the mandates system. One strand of opposition emerged from the ILP's pacifist wing, Walter Ayles, who had been imprisoned as a conscientious objector before serving as Labour MP for Bristol North during MacDonald's minority government, made no distinction between mandates and conventional forms of empire, arguing that the inevitable consequence of administering mandates was war. At the ILP's annual conference in 1925 Ayles condemned the Labour government's use of military force to put down an uprising in Transjordan:

> Recently Lord Thomson had said that when a rising of the population of Trans-Jordania had taken place he had sent, at short notice aeroplanes to bombard them, and 600 tribesmen had been killed and the rest driven into the desert. That was a Labour Minister's policy… If they wanted an army to defend their Empire, it meant that they believed in war.[72]

Similarly, pacifist George Lansbury strongly criticised the Labour government's use of military force – which included aerial bombings – in Iraq.[73] Furthermore, the ILP leadership pressed Labour to commit to ending the Iraq mandate. In late 1925, a statement was issued in which the ILP expressed 'alarm' and 'indignation' at the prospect of plans to prolong the Iraq mandate for a further 25 years.[74] Soon after, the ILP leadership called on Labour to break with its continuity doctrine. It called on Labour to 'repudiate' any treaties that the Conservative government entered into with Iraq and 'give notice of its intention to terminate the mandate as soon as it assumes office again'.[75] This was significant given that this would be the first 'A' status mandate to be terminated. Some were so angered by the Labour

[71] 'Jews and Arabs in Palestine', *New Leader*, 24 April 1925.
[72] ILP, *Annual Report*, 1925, p. 135.
[73] Shepherd and Laybourn, *Britain's First Labour Government*, pp. 144-5.
[74] ILP, *Annual Report*, 1926, p. 41. For details of the terms of the treaty between Britain and Iraq, see Pedersen, *Guardians*, pp. 263-4.
[75] ILP, *Annual Report*, 1926, p. 42.

government's record with respect to British colonies and mandates that they urged the ILP group to remove MacDonald as leader of the PLP. Citing the examples of Egypt, India and Iraq, Joseph Southall stated at the ILP's annual conference in 1926: 'It was notorious that whenever the I.L.P attacked the Tories the spokesmen of the Government had only to look up the record of the Labour government and say they were following the lead of Ramsay MacDonald'.[76]

Another vocal critic of mandates was Frederick Seymour Cocks, one of the numerous Liberal converts to the ILP. In the immediate aftermath of the war, Cocks had been the author of an influential UDC pamphlet which collated and published the secret treaties.[77] In his concluding observations, he called upon governments to 'revise their war aims' and repudiate the idea of incorporating 'reluctant populations' within European empires.[78] Unless a 'democratic peace' was ensured, cautioned Cocks, there would inevitably be 'fresh wars'.[79] During the mid-1920s, Cocks continued to be a vocal critic of mandates. In articles published in the UDC journal *Foreign Affairs* and the ILP journal *Socialist Review*, Cocks levelled strong criticisms against French administration of Syria and British rule in Mesopotamia. He also expressed a fundamental objection to the way in which the mandates had been allocated. In accordance with Article 22 of the League's covenant, the League of Nations was supposed to select an appropriate mandatory power and the native inhabitants were to be consulted. However, what had transpired instead was that France and Britain had chosen these territories, imposed their rule upon 'unwilling populations' by military means, and then the League of Nations had conferred the mandate.[80] Thus, he argued, these developments had rendered the sentiments expressed in Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations 'piercing in their irony'.[81] Mandates, he concluded, were better described as 'camouflaged annexation'.[82] Yet despite his clear sympathy for the nationalist aspirations of various Arab nations, Cocks did not at this point highlight the case of Palestine.[83]

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[76] Ibid., p. 70.
[77] Cline, *Recruits to Labour*, p. 155.
[78] Frederick Seymour Cocks, *The Secret Treaties and Understandings* (London, 1918), p. 75. Cocks was also the biographer of E.D. Morel, see Cocks, *E.D. Morel: The Man and his Work* (London, 1920).
[79] Cocks, *The Secret Treaties*, p. 75.
[80] Cocks, 'The Syrian Mandate Part I', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 8, July 1926, p. 11; Cocks, 'The Foreign Field: The Near East', *Socialist Review*, February 1928, pp. 12-13.
[81] Cocks, 'The Syrian Mandate', p. 9.
[82] Ibid., p. 11.
[83] Cocks, 'The Foreign Field: Imperialist Policy in Iraq', *Socialist Review*, April 1928, p. 14.

However, despite these various criticisms, official ILP policy remained largely supportive of the mandates system. In March 1926, its empire policy committee, which included Buxton, Leonard Woolf and Harold Laski and was chaired by Harry Snell MP, concluded that while its current operation was 'open to criticism in some respects', the mandates system was nevertheless 'in the main based on right principles'.[84] The report argued that mandates did not represent conventional imperialism but were 'a trust' which, if carried out appropriately, would help mandated nations develop self-governing institutions. Moreover, it claimed that mandates were an important recognition that development in these territories was an international concern rather than allowing for their exploitation by a single imperialist power.[85] This, it was contended, had the potential to remove one of the main causes of war, namely 'economic imperialism'. Rather than challenge the basis of mandates, the ILP commission backed Buxton's recommendation that the powers of the PMC should be extended to periodically monitor the administration of 'colonial dependencies of all nations'.[86] Furthermore, it demanded the implementation of a code of rights for 'subject races and countries'. It was envisioned that these regulations, which would be drawn up by the ILO, would become the 'general standard of the world' and would include the right to access education as well as the 'progressive development' of self-governing institutions.[87] In addition, the report recommended that all those appointed to the colonial service 'dealing with native races', must possess 'an adequate training in ethnology and anthropology'.[88]

The report also proposed some significant alterations in the way that the PMC operated. Rather than a representative of a mandatory power reporting to the League, the PMC should be given 'full powers of inquiry and inspection by its agents on the spot'.[89] This work would be carried out by a commissioner, who would be assigned to each mandate and would be of a different nationality to that of the mandatory power. Each commissioner would act as the League's ambassador for the mandated territory and report independently to the League.[90]

However, these proposals did not go entirely uncontested. One member of the committee, Fred Longden, completely rejected the report. At the party's annual conference, he outlined

[84] ILP, *Socialism and the Empire: Report of the ILP Empire Policy Committee* (London, 1926), p. 18.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid., p. 19.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.

his objections. He argued that from a socialist perspective, only two approaches were acceptable: either total non-interference with native rights or co-operation on an equal basis. Thus, Longden criticised the proposals as being predicated upon an assumption of superiority: 'God's Englishmen appointed to guide natives along the lines of self-government!'.[91] Accordingly Londgen backed attempts to amend party policy to a position which would call on the next Labour government to dismantle the empire including mandates and create a 'real commonwealth based upon common and individual contact and equality' to ensure 'real liberty'.[92] This effort however, proved unsuccessful as the majority of delegates voted to endorse the report.

Brailsford continued to advocate reform of the mandates system. He called for the powers of the PMC to be 'considerably strengthened'. One proposal was for the PMC to have more powers of supervision to ensure that imperial powers could not derive significant economic benefits from their mandated territories. This he believed would result in 'the guardians' taking 'a more flattering view' of a nation's capacity for self-government.[93] Another suggestion was for the PMC to be empowered to employ inspectors who would travel to various mandates in order to inform itself of 'the daily working of the administration which it is expected to supervise'.[94] This measure he claimed would be beneficial for two reasons. First, because the League's inspectors would become aware of any 'misgovernment' before native populations had been 'driven to rebellion'. The system of petitioning to highlight grievances had proved inadequate. Secondly, it would enable the inspectors to make 'comparative' reports regarding the polices of the various mandatory powers. He was not optimistic about these developments given that the Council of the League was dominated by the major powers which 'openly displayed its jealously of the Mandates Commission'.[95] The only way this could be overcome was for the League's Assembly to assert its authority and give such measures 'firm support'. Brailsford also argued that the principles of mandates system should be extended and applied to all colonies. Furthermore, he advocated for the creation of an international civil service comprising of various European nationalities who would essentially learn best practice from each other's colonial experiences and would

[91] Quoted in Stephen Howe, *Anti-Colonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire 1918-1964* (Oxford, 1993), p. 69.
[92] ILP, *Annual Report*, 1926, pp. 93-4.
[93] H.N. Brailsford, *Olives of Endless Age: Being A View of This Distracted World and the Possibility of International Unity* (London, 1928), p. 334.
[94] Ibid., p. 335.
[95] Ibid., p. 336.

'administer all these non-self-governing areas, under its direct control'.[96] Developments such as these would ensure the end of imperialism and in its place 'the Great Society, which is all humanity, incarnated in the League, would bear the ultimate responsibility for the destinies of all immature peoples subject to alien rule'.[97] Brailsford, clearly still had influence within the ILP in his capacity as a member of its International committee, as many of these suggestions were included in the resolution on the colonial question submitted by the ILP to the LSI's congress of 1928.[98]

As far as Palestine was concerned, Brailsford noted that the country could not become a Jewish national home without 'a foreign garrison'. Therefore, he suggested that if and when Britain decided to relinquish control, the League of Nations should continue to provide 'the necessary police force' to ensure the successful realisation of the nascent Zionist project.[99] In a glowing review in the ILP's journal *Socialist Review,* Hugh Dalton endorsed Brailsford's vision, claiming that his 'constructive proposals' were 'consistent with Socialist principles'.[100]

As noted in Chapter Two, the emergence of the LAI in 1927 posed a challenge to the mandates system. The LAI was a transnational network which brought together western communists, intellectuals, and socialists together with anti-colonial nationalists. A distinguishing feature of the LAI was its demand for immediate and unconditional national independence. Accordingly, activists in the LAI adopted an uncompromising stance against mandates. As Reginald Bridgeman, an ILPer and chair of the LAI's British section articulated: 'Just as I reject the view expressed by the Conservatives that Labour is not fit to govern, so I reject the idea that one country can claim to decide whether another country is fit for self-government or not'.[101] LAI literature was stridently critical of Labour and the LSI's support of the mandates system. ILPers such as Brailsford who as we have seen, advocated reform rather than the dismantling of the mandates system were castigated for holding 'imperialist' views.[102] Therefore, the central involvement of ILP leaders Maxton and

[96] Ibid., pp. 335-6.
[97] Ibid., p. 339.
[98] ILP, *Annual Report,* 1928, pp. 47-50.
[99] Brailsford, *Olives of Endless Age,* p. 331.
[100] Hugh Dalton, 'Olives of Endless Age', *Socialist Review*, vol. 29, June 1928, p. 46.
[101] 'Election Address' 1929. DBN 2/2.
[102] 'Book Reviews: An ILP Socialist Defends the League of Nations', *Anti-Imperialist Review,* July 1928, vol. 1. no. 1, pp. 72-74.

Brockway as well as several parliamentarians, ILP branches and activists in the LAI marked a radical and contentious departure from official policy.

It was at this time that Wedgwood promoted his idea of Palestine as the 'Seventh Dominion'. Wedgwood argued that the British government should actively assist in the intensive colonisation of Palestine in order to create a Jewish majority. Once this had been obtained, Palestine should at the expiration of the mandate become a dominion state within the British empire. This 'Equal Union' would 'confer protection without destroying independence or self-respect'.[103] He envisioned Palestine becoming one of the free 'self-governing dominations of the British empire'.[104] As such, he rather unconvincingly attempted to claim that such a policy would be in accordance with Article 2 of the Mandate which, as we have seen, required the administration to prepare Palestine for self-government.[105] However, this proposal did not gain much support, even from many pro-Zionist Labourites as it clearly breached the intended terms of the mandate.

The Second Labour Government and the Crisis in Palestine, 1929-1931

On 5 June 1929, Labour returned to office, forming its second minority government under MacDonald's leadership. Again, the ILP was well-represented, with 160 Labour MPs holding ILP membership, of which 37 were ILP sponsored.[106] Yet, as we have seen, only a small minority of these MPs were supportive of the more left-wing direction under Maxton's leadership.[107] Palestine quickly became an exceptionally pressing matter for both the Labour government and the League of Nations when, in late August 1929, unprecedented levels of inter-communal violence broke out resulting in hundreds of fatalities.[108] The Labour government responded by deploying troops, commissioning two official inquiries and issuing

[103] Josiah. C. Wedgwood, *The Seventh Dominion* (London, 1928), p. 4.
[104] N.A Rose, *The Gentile Zionists: A Study in Anglo-Zionist Diplomacy 1929-1939* (Oxford, 1973), p. 76.
[105] Wedgwood, *Seventh Dominion*, p. 33.
[106] The exact number of ILP MPs in the 1929-31 Labour contingent varies. Leading Scottish ILPer and MP Thomas Johnston claimed it was 197, see Thomas Johnston, *Memories*, (London, 1952), p. 231. Neil Riddell put the number at 142, see Riddell, *Labour in Crisis: The Second Labour Government 1929-31* (Manchester, 1999), p. 27. In a recent essay, Laybourn states that the total number was 160, see idem, 'The disaffiliation crisis of 1932: The Labour Party, the Independent Labour Party (ILP) and the opinion of ILP members', in Laybourn and John Shepherd (eds.), *Labour and Working-Class Lives: Essays to Celebrate the Life and Work of Chris Wrigley* (Manchester, 2017), p. 121.
[107] Neil Riddell, *Labour in Crisis: The Second Labour Government 1929-31* (Manchester, 1999), p. 27. Furthermore, there were some high-profile resignations. Philip Snowden resigned from the ILP in 1927 and MacDonald, who was increasingly at odds with the ILP during Maxton's leadership, resigned in 1930, see David Marquand, *Ramsay MacDonald* (London, 1982), p. 457.
[108] Cohen, *Britain's Moment in Palestine*, p. 216.

a White Paper. Meanwhile, the League of Nations called an extraordinary session of the PMC which issued a report to the League Council. The Labour government's decision to launch an official inquiry followed by a White Paper was consistent with the response of previous British administrations to episodes of violence. Violent clashes in Jerusalem in 1920 and in Jaffa in 1921 had resulted in commissions of inquiry and the Churchill White Paper had been issued in June 1922, which sought to clarify the criteria governing Jewish immigration into Palestine.[109]

These events sparked intense debate within the Labour movement, which once again highlighted the fractures within Labour on the question of mandatory Palestine. In late August 1929, as tensions were escalating, Brailsford complained that 'the statesmanship of the Labour movement had made no contribution of its own'. [110] He emphasised that the mandate had been accepted 'for the express purpose' of founding the Jewish national home. Therefore, Britain 'could not yield' to Arab objections to Jewish immigration and purchase of land. Brailsford levelled numerous criticisms at the British administration of Palestine and called for 'fresh thinking'. His basic argument was that the British administration had adopted a 'passive attitude' giving 'little direct help' to the creation of a Jewish national home and should now take a more active role.[111] After the fatalities, Brailsford penned another piece, reiterating the need for Britain to continue as the mandatory power in Palestine and remain committed to creating a Jewish national home. 'Rightly or wrongly' he wrote, 'from a mixture of motives, the British Empire assumed this mandate'.[112] Therefore, there could be 'no going back on our word. In the hearing of all the world we promised this home to the Jews. We must labour to preserve the mandate that we claimed.'[113] Brailsford's argued that the respective religious leaders in Palestine should be made to 'answer for the behaviour of the faithful' and in terms of the economic objections to pursuing the mandate, he recommended that a less expensive police force might be recruited from 'some other part of what once was Turkey' such as Albania.[114]

[109] Ibid., p. 129.
[110] H.N. Brailsford, 'The Problems of Palestine', *New Leader,* 22 August 1929.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Brailsford, 'Blood on the Wailing Wall', *New Leader,* 30 August 1929.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid.

But Brailsford's view did not go unchallenged. One correspondent argued that the commitment to establishing a Jewish national home was indefensible because the Balfour Declaration was a secret agreement made 'without the assent' of the people either in Britain or in Palestine which could only be enforced through 'military despotism'.[115] He argued that the Labour government should therefore continue to administer Palestine but renounce this 'unjust' policy and instead ensure a 'precise equality of status' between Jews and Arabs in Palestine.[116] Another correspondent – a Labour prospective parliamentary candidate – was sympathetic to the Palestinian Arab case. He maintained that Britain had implemented a 'divide and rule' strategy and 'exercised a military dictatorship' in Palestine and called on the Labour government to alter British policy so that it did not favour the Jewish population over the Palestinian Arab population.[117] Brailsford replied with the insistence that promoting Jewish national home was the Mandatory authority's 'first duty'.[118]

The LAI viewed the outbreak of violence as a legitimate anti-colonial nationalist uprising and condemned the British government's response as 'imperialist terror'.[119] The LAI deplored Brailsford's articles in the *New Leader,* accusing the ILP of being 'in favour of the crushing of the Arab revolt in Palestine'.[120] Maxton was pressed to publish a response which reflected the LAI position. His refusal to comply was one of the key reasons cited for his expulsion from the LAI. While other factors such as the Communist Party's 'class against class' policy were certainly at play in this episode, it was true that the ILP leadership had refrained from demanding the immediate end of the mandate. While Maxton appeared unwilling to endorse the LAI's stance, Brockway merely pressed for an inter-racial round table conference, protested against the treatment of political prisoners and the use of the death penalty and called for the publication of the McMahon-Husayn correspondence of 1915.[121] The latter demand referred to a series of letters exchanged between the British high commissioner in Egypt and the Sharif of Mecca, which, Palestinian Arab nationalists maintained, showed that prior to the issuing of the Balfour Declaration, Britain had already promised Palestine to the

[115] 'Abandon the Mandate', *New Leader,* 13 September 1929.
[116] Ibid.
[117] 'Jews and Arabs', Ibid.
[118] H.N. Brailsford, 'The Future of Zionism', *New Leader,* 4 April 1930.
[119] LAI, 'Appeal against Imperialist Terror in Palestine' 1929.
[120] *Report of the National Conference of the LAI 1931,* p. 9.
[121] H.C. Deb., 29 October 1929, vol. 231, cols. 17-19; H.C. Deb., 7 May 1930, vol. 238 col. 1089; 'Plan Acceptable to All Concerned in Palestine Considered by Britain', *JTA,* 9 May 1930.

Sharif of Mecca, thus invalidating the Zionist claim.[122] Furthermore, Brockway voted in favour of government's security measures which had been implemented in the wake of the revolt.[123]

MacDonald's first speech to the League's Assembly had been Eurocentric, focusing exclusively on issues such as maintaining peace in Europe and the admission of Germany to the League.[124] However, when MacDonald addressed the Assembly on 2 September 1929, he told the delegates that ensuring peace in Europe, although still 'important and essential'. would only 'carry us a small way... towards universal peace'. There were much more 'intricate problems' which had to be addressed. In a speech that echoed his earlier writings on Palestine and the Middle East, he referred to the existence of 'An old world, old in civilisation, old in philosophy, old in religion, old in culture, which has hitherto been weak in those material powers that have characterised the western peoples'.[125] MacDonald opined that largely because of western influence, there was now a growing demand for national self-determination in the east and cautioned that unless this was recognised by European powers and channelled into negotiated agreements, there was the risk of war.

MacDonald also reported on the situation in Palestine. He stressed that it was of vital importance to the League for Britain to continue as the mandatory power in Palestine:

> No nation, no civilised nation, no nation with any political responsibility, no nation cooperating with other nations to do their best for all the peoples of the world will ever yield to outbursts of criminality and murder. No, never; for to do so would be to permit the triumph of the very forces which the League of Nations we have founded is called upon to control.[126]

Furthermore, he assured the delegates that the British government had restored order and would launch an inquiry to prevent a recurrence. Nansen approvingly remarked that

[122] Elie Kedourie, *In the Anglo-Arab Labyrinth: The McMahon-Husayn Correspondence and its Interpretations 1914-1939* (London, 2000), p. 3 and pp. 224-5.
[123] H.C. Deb., 24 February 1930, vol. 235, col. 2007.
[124] League of Nations, *Official Journal of the Records of the Fifth Assembly: Text of the Debates* (Geneva, 1924), pp. 41-45.
[125] League of Nations, *Official Journal, Records of the Tenth Assembly: Text of the Debates* (Geneva, 1929), p. 33.
[126] Ibid.

MacDonald's comments had made the Assembly a truly 'international forum' and placed the League 'in the centre of world affairs'.[127]

The following day, on 3 September 1929, the Colonial Office announced its intention to appoint a commission of inquiry and in October, the Shaw Commission, consisting of a cross-party delegation of MPs and chaired by jurist Sir Walter Shaw, was despatched.[128] Labour's representative on the commission was Harry Snell MP, who previously had chaired the ILP's empire committee. The Labour government repeatedly stressed that the commission would not affect Britain's fundamental policy of remaining the mandatory power in Palestine, nor its commitment to the creation of a Jewish national home. The commission's remit was limited to establishing 'the immediate causes' of the violence and 'suggest means of preventing a recurrence'.[129]

In December 1929, Brailsford returned to the subject of Palestine, outlining a strategy in which he argued that Britain should signal its intention to relinquish the Palestine mandate within 15 years and set a limit on Jewish immigration of between 33% and 45% of the total population. Brailsford believed that guaranteeing an Arab majority would improve Arab-Jewish relations by placating the central Palestinian Arab concern of becoming a minority. The Palestinian Arabs, said Brailsford, formed an overwhelming majority and had 'settled in Palestine for almost as many centuries as our Germanic ancestors have held England'.[130] Therefore, even if Zionism had brought about cultural and economic gains, the Palestinian Arabs could not be refused their right of self-determination. The current and future benefits of Zionism were ultimately 'irrelevant' because in the final analysis 'it is they and not we who must decide what is best for them'.[131]

According to Brailsford, given the rate of immigration, to secure a Jewish majority Britain would have to retain control over Palestine for a further 160 years, which was not only legally and morally dubious, but also politically impossible due to a shift in British public opinion. Therefore, he appealed to the Zionist movement to accept this compromise and to

[127] 'The League of Nations', *Spectator*, 21 September 1929.
[128] Pinhas Ofer, 'The Commission on the Palestine Disturbances of August 1929: Appointment, Terms of Reference, Procedure and Report', *Middle Eastern Studies* 21 (1985), p. 349.
[129] H.C. Deb., 3 April 1930, vol. 237, cols. 1466-7
[130] Brailsford, 'Says Limit Jewish Palestine Influx to Half of Population to Calm Arab Fears of Encroachment', *JTA*, 9 December 1929.
[131] Ibid.

‘coldly face the fact that… an immense change has come about in the attitude of the whole nation towards territorial expansion overseas’. Brailsford predicted that given ‘the whole trend of the development of British imperialism since the War’, it was more than likely that in the near future Britain would simply agree a treaty with ‘an autonomous Arab Palestine’ to maintain control of the Suez Canal and ‘save face’ by ensuring that the League of Nations safeguarded the rights of the Jewish minority as it did in Romania and Poland. [132]

The Union of Democratic Control (UDC) closely followed events in Palestine. Since the end of the First World War, the anti-militarist pressure group had continued to actively engage in issues regarding international politics. Its journal *Foreign Affairs* featured articles on various international issues, many of which were penned by the publication’s editor Norman Angell. As we have seen, Angell was a committed supporter of Zionism and supported the continuation of the British presence in Palestine. He was acutely aware that this was a seemingly inconsistent stance for someone who had forged his reputation as a critic of both nationalism and imperialism. As he noted, he was often asked: ‘How do you reconcile anti-Imperialism with your support for British bayonets in Palestine; self-determination with the defiance of the will of the immense majority of the people in Palestine?’[133] In answer to this, Angell began his analysis of the situation in Palestine with an overarching critique of political nationalism and, in particular, the significance which nationalist movements placed upon the principles of independence and self-determination. Angell remarked:

> I would like to see the definition or interpretation of sweeping remarks like ‘‘self-determination’’, ‘‘independence’’ [and] ‘‘majority rule’’… Majority of what? The world, the nation, the state, the city, the religious community, the race, the industrial groups? What makes the unit within which the rule shall operate? Similarly as to ‘‘self-determination’’. Does it mean that Moslems may claim to be ruled by Moslems, Jews by Jews, Protestants by Protestants? Then why not Baptists by Baptists, blondes by blondes, brunettes by brunettes? [134]

[132] Ibid. For more on how this system worked in practice see Caroline Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others: The Great Powers, The Jews and International Minority Protection, 1878-1938* (Cambridge 2004), p. 277.
[133] Norman Angell, ‘Defence of Zionism’, *New Judea*, April 1930, republished in Jewish Socialist Labour Party, *British Labour Policy on Palestine: A Collection of Documents, Speeches and Articles, 1917-1938* (London, 1938) p. 129.
[134] Ibid.

According to Angell, the Palestinian Arab thesis was a 'simple one', namely that 'Arabs are in a majority' and therefore it followed that the imposition of Zionism was a violation of democracy, independence, nationalism and self-determination.[135] However, in his view, when applied to the modern, interdependent world, such concepts were 'inadequate' and 'unworkable'.[136] Like MacDonald's view of the British empire, Angell argued that whatever the rights and wrongs of previous invasions, occupations and migrations, these were now historical facts which could not be undone.[137] Therefore, 'absolute principles' were 'reduced to absurdity… by the facts of history'. Consequently, for Angell, both Indian and Arab nationalist claims for complete self-determination were as unrealistic as it would be for Native Americans to demand 'that the invaders of New York or Chicago should kindly go back home'.[138] Instead, he argued that all credible discussions on the subject must accept 'the plain fact of world-wide interdependence of peoples, and the consequent mutual obligation'.[139] As Martin Ceadel put it, at this time, Angell's 'anti-nationalism took precedence over his anti-imperialism' and he was 'more sceptical than many on the left of demands to replace imperial rule with national self-determination'.[140]

Regarding the specific situation in Palestine, Angell maintained that there was an important distinction to be made between the claims of the Arab nationalists and those of the Zionists. In his interpretation of Zionism, the movement did not demand complete independence for the Jewish national home, that is to say the right 'to live under a government of their own people'.[141] Rather, the Zionist movement demanded an 'impartial government' under which 'their community' and 'special cultural traditions and qualities' could be 'freely developed'. By contrast, Palestinian Arab nationalism 'invoked the… unworkable principles' of independence and self-determination which Angell held to have been responsible for so much damage in Europe. Moreover, Angell argued that Zionism would solve a world problem, and therefore its successful realisation took precedence over what he termed the 'lesser consideration' of Palestinian Arab independence. When speaking about 'majority right', argued Angell, the unit which internationalists must argue for was not a particular nation but

[135] Ibid.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Angell, 'The New Problems of Imperial Policy', *Foreign Affairs*, December 1929, pp. 231-234.
[138] Ibid., p. 232.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Martin Ceadel, *Living the Great Illusion: Sir Norman Angell 1872–1967* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 279-280.
[141] Angell, 'The New Problems of Imperial Policy', p. 234.

'the world itself'.[142] This was a view shared by Brailsford, who when speaking at a debate under the auspices of the League of Nations Union asserted that Zionist claims took precedence over Palestinian Arab nationalism because 'the welfare of humanity comes before that of a tribe, a nation, or even an empire'.[143]

Angell subscribed to the notion that mandates were a nascent form of international government. Thus, he stressed that the administration in Palestine was an 'international' government, which should strive to be an 'impartial' one. The significance of this was that if this model were to prove successful, 'it may be a forerunner of a type of government' according to Angell would be 'more and more necessary, in some form or other, in various parts of the world'.[144] For these reasons, there could be 'no question' of terminating the mandate.

In March 1930, the Shaw Commission published its findings. It determined that the fundamental cause of the violence was the 'disappointment' of Palestinian Arab 'political and national aspirations' and 'fear for their economic future'.[145] The report also contained criticisms of the Zionist movement, mostly notably regarding the rate of Jewish immigration into Palestine, which was deemed to be excessive and in contravention of the terms set out in the 1922 White Paper. It concluded that the British government should make a clear policy pronouncement which unambiguously stated that the rights of Palestinian Arabs would be safeguarded, and which was 'more explicit' regarding the issues of immigration and land purchase. While the report did not make any formal recommendations regarding the creation of self-governing institutions, it did highlight that the absence of 'any measure of self-government' was an issue which was 'greatly aggravating' the difficulties faced by the British administration in Palestine.[146]

MacDonald responded to the report's publication by giving assurances that Britain would continue with the Palestine mandate. It was, he stated, 'an international obligation from which there could be no question of receding'. Significantly, MacDonald framed the

[142] Ibid.
[143] 'Three Opinions of the Zionist Movement', *Jewish Criterion*, 16 January 1931.
[144] Ibid. For the idea of mandates as a form of intentional government see R.N. Chowdhuri, *International Mandates and Trusteeship Systems: A Comparative Study* (The Hague, 1955), pp. 56-7 and 235-6.
[145] *Report of the Commission on the Palestine Disturbances of August 1929* (London, 1930), p. 163. Cmd. 3530
[146] Ibid., p. 162.

government's responsibilities as a 'double undertaking' – namely on the one hand creating a Jewish national home, and on the other ensuring the rights of the non-Jewish population were not affected. He argued that both responsibilities had to be pursued in 'equal measure'.[147] The latter part of this statement was certainly a new interpretation of the mandate. The PMC had previously characterised the mandate having a 'dual nature' which placed a 'twofold duty' upon the mandatory power.[148] However, MacDonald's remarks making it explicit that these obligations were of equal weight was without precedent.

However, Labour's representative Harry Snell dissented from the commission's findings in several substantial respects. Firstly, Snell attributed considerable responsibility to the Mufti of Jerusalem and to the Arab nationalist leaders for inciting violence. He also rejected the report's criticisms of the nature of Jewish immigration and the purchase of land. Furthermore, he objected to the suggestion of extending self-government. While acknowledging that such Palestinian Arab demands were 'keen and entirely honourable', he denied that the absence of self-governing institutions was a contributing factor in the recent violence.[149] Snell's basic argument was that the solution did not lie in steps toward self-government, which he characterised as 'political concessions', but rather in 'social and economic reconstruction and the establishment of public security'. This was entirely at odds with the policy which he had advocated in his capacity as chair of the ILP's empire committee which had unequivocally recommended creating self-governing institutions in mandated territories.[150]

Instead, Snell was convinced that the priority was inter-racial harmony and cooperation and outlined several initiatives to achieve this. Rather than a legislative assembly, he advocated the establishment of a bi-racial conference focused on securing 'agreement on specific proposals affecting the welfare of the nation as a whole'. If successful, this could then form the basis for the creation of local bi-racial committees dedicated to implementing 'practical steps' toward 'social improvements'.[151] Writing in the *New Leader*, Brailsford backed Snell's analysis regarding the causes of the violence and his objections to the Shaw commission's recommendations. For instance, he argued that the majority of Palestinian Arabs were not ready for self-government and that such a development was unacceptable because it would

[147] H.C. Deb., 3 April 1930, vol. 237, col. 1466.
[148] PMC Minutes, 5th Session, p. 188.
[149] *Report of the Commission on the Palestine Disturbances*, p. 178.
[150] ILP, *Socialism and the Empire*, pp. 18-19.
[151] *Report of the Commission on the Palestine Disturbances*, p. 183.

'thwart' the creation of a Jewish national home. However, he was equally adamant that self-government could not be denied indefinitely, especially when it had been granted to 'the sister population' in Egypt.[152] Cautioning against placing restrictions on Jewish immigration, he claimed that it would 'feed' the Palestinian Arab opposition which would in turn 'delay the reconciliation of the two races' which would ultimately 'postpone the time' when self-government could be 'safely granted'.[153]

Brailsford emphasised that the British government must not be neutral or impartial, rather it was the 'first duty' of the British administration to promote development of the Jewish national home. He framed this as an 'anti-imperialist' stance in two ways. First, he argued enabling successful Jewish colonisation would result in arriving at a position whereby the mandate could be ended sooner. Secondly, if the British government did not ensure the creation of a Jewish national home, then it would 'stand before the world as hypocrites', who had used this merely as a pretext to secure its imperial strategical aims vis-à-vis the Suez Canal.[154]

It was at this point that Brailsford first raised the idea of population transfer as a solution. This was an idea which Weizmann had pressed for in his meetings with MacDonald and other leading Labourites, citing the precedent of the transfer agreement between Greece and Turkey.[155] 'Has due attention been paid', Brailsford asked, 'to the reasonable suggestion of the Zionists that in the fertile but sparsely populated province of Transjordania the surplus Arab population might easily be accommodated?'[156] The proposal was later publicly supported by Snell, who claimed that he had previously refrained from expressing such a view during his time serving on the Shaw commission on the grounds that the Palestinian Arab response would be: 'This Labour man has nothing to suggest except that we should be exiled from our native country in order that strangers may come in'.[157]

Labour's policy was also met with criticism from the League of Nations. In June 1930, an extraordinary session of the Permanent Mandates Commission was convened to address

[152] H.N. Brailsford, 'The Future of Zionism', *New Leader,* 4 April 1930.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of Transfer in Zionist Political Thought, 1882-1948* (London, 1992), pp. 34-38.
[156] Brailsford, 'The Future of Zionism', *New Leader,* 4 April 1930.
[157] H.C. Deb., 17 November 1930, vol. 245, col. 149.

Palestine.[158] During the session, several members of the PMC challenged the findings of the Shaw Commission and criticised the Labour government for failing to prevent the outbreak of violence.[159] The PMC's chair Van Rees approvingly cited Snell's comments, describing his analysis as 'far more logical… than that adopted by the majority'.[160]

Commenting on this, Buxton argued that the Labour government's interaction with the PMC marked a crucial development. In his capacity as Britain's representative in the League's committee on Political Questions he stated:

> Our government has always treated the mandates commission with the greatest respect and has followed its work with general approval. We cordially support the principles on which the mandate system is founded, because we look upon them as representing the first beginning, shall I say the first faint beginning, of the sense of an international responsibility in regard to this great question. Only recently we have had particular examples. It is well known as regards Palestine, for instance… that the British representative [Drummond-Shiels] has clearly indicated that, while he might disagree with particular criticisms, yet he recognised that the mandates commission had a right to criticise. He even went farther and said that it was its duty to criticise – a very significant remark, I venture to say.[161]

The PMC's report to the Council endorsed the Labour government's interpretation of the Mandate that the obligations to both Jews and Arabs were of equal weight.[162] Nevertheless, it also contained criticisms of the British government which dismayed MacDonald who responded by branding the PMC's report a 'dreadful document which every enemy of England had had a hand in drafting'.[163] This reaction illustrated the gulf between rhetoric and reality. MacDonald had been a longstanding proponent of the League of Nations providing international oversight of imperial rule. However, when the League made criticisms of his own government it proved to be unwelcome.

[158] The PMC had hoped this would be convened earlier, see PMC Minutes, 17th Session, p. 9.
[159] Pedersen, *Guardians*, p. 363; PMC Minutes, 17th Session, pp. 27-32.
[160] PMC Minutes, 17th Session, pp. 40-41.
[161] LoN, Records of the Eleventh Ordinary Session of the Assembly, Minutes of the 11th Assembly, 1930, League of Nations Official Journal, Special Supplement No. 90, p. 52.
[162] 'Report to Council of the League of Nations on the Work of the Session' in PMC Minutes, 17th Session, p. 145.
[163] Quoted in Pedersen, *Guardians*, p. 365.

As he had done in 1924, Buxton reiterated the ILP's official policy of generalising the principles of trusteeship to all colonies, not just mandated territories. He claimed that when he explained the mandates system to labour audiences in Britain, the response had often been to approve of the system but query why its application was limited to mandated territories rather than all colonies. Buxton argued that if Article 22 and 23 of the League's Covenant were properly applied, it would ensure that this anomaly would be addressed. However, he sounded a note of caution, stating that the Labour government was not actually taking any concrete steps to achieve this.[164] Nevertheless, Buxton's comments were enough to alarm pro-imperialist Conservatives such as Anthony Eden, who raised the issue in the House of Commons. Eden claimed that it amounted to an 'invitation to the Mandates Commission to extend their authority over all British Colonies'.[165] MacDonald responded by defending Buxton's comments, remarking that the principle of trusteeship was 'derived not only from the provisions of the Mandates but also from Article 23 of the Covenant which applied to all territories under the jurisdiction of members of the League' and rejected Eden's contention, with the instance that such a policy 'has never entered our minds'.[166]

The Shaw Commission led to the establishment of the Hope-Simpson inquiry which carried out an in-depth examination of the issues of immigration, land settlement and development.[167] On 20 October 1930, the Labour government issued its White Paper on Palestine which insisted that the creation of a Jewish national home remained government policy and reiterated MacDonald's formulation of a 'double undertaking' of 'equal weight', noting with satisfaction that this interpretation of the mandate had been 'rendered authoritative' by the Council's approval of the PMC's report.[168] It was repeatedly stressed that this was largely an exercise in continuity which built upon the 1922 White Paper. However, it included a proviso that if Jewish immigration resulted in preventing the Palestinian Arab population 'from obtaining the work necessary for its maintenance', or if Jewish unemployment 'unfavourably affected' 'the general labour position', it was 'the duty of the Mandatory Power under the Mandate' to reduce, or, if necessary, to suspend, such immigration until the unemployed portion of the 'other sections' were in a position to obtain

[164] League of Nations Official Journal, Special Supplement No. 90, Records of the Eleventh Ordinary Session of the Assembly, Minutes of the 11th Assembly, 1930, Minutes of the 6th Committee, p. 55.
[165] H.C. Deb., 12 November 1930, vol. 244, col. 1646.
[166] Ibid.
[167] Cohen, *Britain's Moment in Palestine*, p. 222.
[168] *Palestine: Statement of Policy by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom* (London, 1930), p. 8. Cmd. 3692.

work.[169] The White Paper did not propose to create genuinely democratic self-governing institutions on the basis that this could affect the British government's obligations under the mandate, but did state that the plan to create a legislative council would be revived.[170]

The ILP editorial line endorsed the proposals declaring: 'However sympathetic one may be to Jewish aspirations, it is difficult to see how the Government could refrain from interfering if it were to discharge its responsibilities to the Arab population'.[171] The editorial quoted the section of the White Paper which discussed the increase in the Jewish population in Palestine. The conclusion was drawn that Zionist immigration was indeed dispossessing the native Palestinian Arabs and that the Zionist movement was seeking to subjugate the Arab population. Therefore, the government had been correct to intervene as 'Clearly if this process had been allowed to continue unchecked, in a comparatively short time the Arabs would have been wholly a landless proletariat in permanent subjection to the Jewish colonists'.[172]

Similarly, Cocks (now a Labour MP) defended the government's White Paper and presented a comprehensively anti-Zionist case. In his opening remarks, he criticised his parliamentary colleagues for disregarding Article 6 of the Palestine mandate which, he emphasised, included the clause guaranteeing that 'the rights of other sections of the population' would not be 'prejudiced'.[173] Addressing the previous speaker, David Lloyd-George, he claimed that rather than assessing the situation objectively, Lloyd-George's pro-Zionist stance was influenced by electoral concerns the upcoming by-election in East London. Earlier contributors to the debate had argued that Palestine, allocated as the site of the Jewish national home was a relatively small area when compared to the total size of Arab territories, only the size of Wales. Cocks took up this analogy and drew a radically different conclusion:

> As comparison has been made between Palestine and Wales, I wonder what the right honourable member for Canvorn Boroughs [Lloyd-George] would say if it were suggested that a number of Scotsmen should invade Wales and purchase land and refuse to employ any

[169] Ibid., p. 16.
[170] For details see Ibid., p. 10; Kelemen, *British Left and Zionism,* p. 21.
[171] 'What We Think: Jews and Arabs', *New Leader*, 24 October 1930.
[172] Ibid.
[173] H.C. Deb., 17 November 1930, vol. 245, col. 164.

> Welshman on the land and should say to the Welsh people, ‘‘You can go across can go across the Severn to England’’. This is what is happening in Palestine.[174]

Cocks returned to the subject of secret treaties and understandings. He insisted that the McMahon correspondence – which he claimed to have seen extracts of – had indeed promised independence to the Arabs and complained that successive British governments had ‘shielded themselves’ by supressing the publication of the correspondence. Since late 1929, Cocks had repeatedly used parliamentary questions as an opportunity to urge the Labour government to ‘abandon the practice of secret diplomacy’ and publish the McMahon correspondence.[175] But if Cocks had hoped the Labour government might commit itself to more transparency, he was to be disappointed as the request was denied by the under-secretary of state for the colonies.[176] The Labour cabinet subsequently concluded that it was not ‘in the public interest’ to publish the correspondence.[177]

Cocks reiterated his objection made in his earlier writings to the way mandates had been drawn up, whereby contrary to the claim in Article 22 of the League Covenant, native populations had not been consulted in the selection of the mandatory power. Thus, he declared ‘a great deal has been said about the sacredness of the [Palestine] Mandate. There is more humbug talked about mandates, especially this mandate, than about any international subject’.[178] Furthermore, the Balfour Declaration (subsequently incorporated into the mandate) had ‘very little moral basis or moral validity’, not only because it reneged on the previous commitments made in the McMahon correspondence, but more significantly, because it had violated ‘the great principle of self-determination’. Britain, he argued, had ‘no moral right’ to create a Jewish national home ‘in a country inhabited by some other people who did not wish to receive them’.[179] Nevertheless, Cocks did not call on the government to rescind the mandate or abandon the policy of establishing of a Jewish national home. Rather,

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[174] Ibid.
[175] H.C. Deb., 18 December 1929, vol. 233, cols. 1389; H.C. Deb, 11 December 1929, vol. 233, col. 447. ‘Plan Acceptable to All Concerned in Palestine Considered by Britain’, *JTA*, 9 May 1930.
[176] H.C. Deb., 18 December 1929, vol. 233, cols. 1389.
[177] Cabinet Minutes, 30 July 1930, p. 23. CAB/23/64; This was subsequently relayed to parliament after Cocks had again raised the issue, see ‘McMahon Letters Not to be Published; Incompatible With Public Interest, Commons Told’, *JTA*, 3 August 1930
[178] H.C. Deb., 17 November 1930, vol. 245, col. 166.
[179] Ibid., col. 165.

he argued that the British government must ensure that there was no attempt to turn Palestine into a Jewish state but only a Jewish national home within Palestine.[180]

However, Passfield's White Paper proved controversial and was met with vigorous opposition from various quarters, not least from within the labour movement. In parliament, Snell denied that the Labour government could be deemed entirely culpable for the outbreak of violence given that it had only recently assumed office prior to the incident. Nevertheless, he voiced his concerns about the White Paper, claiming that its effect had been to set back racial harmony in Palestine.[181] Many critics accused the government of breaching the terms of the mandate. John Scurr accused the government of failing to carry out the terms of the mandate and pledged to challenge the government.[182] *Poale Zion's* Kaplansky described it as 'a humiliation at the hands of a Labour government', stating that his organisation would 'not accept or submit to the new interpretation of the Mandate'.[183] Similarly, the LSI's Palestine committee protested against 'the spirit and the letter' of the White Paper. From the committee's perspective. the task 'entrusted by the League of Nations to the Mandatory Power' was to 'assist actively… in promoting a large and intensive immigration and Jewish colonisation movement aiming at the effecting of the Jewish Homeland as speedily as possible'.[184] This included facilitating Jewish migration into Transjordan. Writing in the *New Leader*, Brailsford branded the proposals 'incredibly tactless'.[185] Significantly, Brailsford now strongly advocated population transfer. He rejected the idea that 'a wholesale migration of the Palestine Arabs to make way for Zionists' was 'not feasible'.[186] Instead, Brailsford considered population transfer to be a viable solution and criticised the Labour government for not engaging in a 'serious discussion of this possibility'.[187] Furthermore, Brailsford called for the administration of Palestine to be transferred from the Colonial Office to the Foreign Office, claiming that the former was in a 'pathological state of sensitiveness' on the question of Palestine.[188]

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[180] Ibid., col. 167.
[181] H.C. Deb., 17 November 1930, vol. 245, col. 150.
[182] 'Labour MP to Challenge Government', *Manchester Guardian*, 24 October 1930.
[183] 'Jewish Socialists' Humiliation', *Ibid*.
[184] 'Leading International Socialists Protest Against Labour Government's Palestine White Paper', *JTA*, 8 January 1931.
[185] Brailsford, 'Can Jews and Arabs Live Together?', *New Leader*, 2 January 1931.
[186] 'Brailsford Urges Transfer of Palestine Administration to British Foreign Office', *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, 16 January 1931.
[187] Ibid.
[188] Ibid.

MacDonald initially responded by defending the White Paper, repeating his interpretation of the mandate as a 'double undertaking' and arguing that its proposals were necessary to ensure that the mandate would be 'carried out in such a way that civil disorder is not going to result from its operation'. [189] However, in light of the considerable opposition, it was not put to a parliamentary vote, and in February 1931, MacDonald then essentially retracted much of the white paper in the form of a letter to Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann, which was subsequently issued as a statement to parliament and sent to the League of Nations as an official policy document.[190] This was certainly a novel approach, as Michael J. Cohen has written, effectively annulling official government policy 'by method of a letter written by the Prime Minister to a private individual, is probably unique in the annals of the British constitution'.[191] In his 'authoritative interpretation' of the White Paper, MacDonald denied that Labour's policy would be detrimental to the creation of the Jewish national home, reassuring critics that it was not the government's intention to end land purchases or curtail immigration.[192] Furthermore, the Labour cabinet committee ruled out even the limited measures towards self-government set out in the White Paper.[193] This apparent about-face has been attributed to the effective lobbying efforts of the Zionist movement. However, more recent scholarship has stressed that other factors such as the need for party unity, the international reaction and the critical verdict issued by the League of Nations were also key factors in this decision.[194]

'A Socialist Policy for Palestine' and the Mandatory System, 1932-1939

In August 1931, the Labour government collapsed. The party split and was heavily defeated at the subsequent general election and only a handful of ILP MPs were returned to parliament. At its conference in July 1932, a majority of delegates voted in favour of the ILP

[189] H.C. Deb., 17 November 1930, vol. 245, col. 115.
[190] Cohen, *Britain's Moment in Palestine*, p. 232 and p. 236. Initially, the cabinet had agreed to issue the letter as a new White Paper, but this was rejected after opposition from colonial officials in Palestine, see Idem, p. 235. For how MacDonald's letter disavowed Passfield's White Paper see: Idem and Kelemen, *British Left and Zionism*, p. 23.
[191] Cohen, *Britain's Moment in Palestine*, p. 238.
[192] H.C. Deb, 13 February 1931, vol. 248, cols. 751-7. Weizmann was satisfied by this outcome and claimed that he was vindicated by the increased levels of Jewish immigration which followed, see Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error: Autobiography of Chaim Weizmann* (London, 1949), p. 335.
[193] Cohen, *Britain's Moment in Palestine*, p. 235.
[194] Carly Beckerman-Boys, 'Reversal of the Passfield White Paper: A Reassessment', *Journal of Contemporary History* 51 (2), 2015, pp. 213-233. Kelemen argued that the most important factor in the reversal was 'the opprobrium it aroused internationally and particularly in the United States'. See Kelemen, *British Left and Zionism*, p. 23.

disaffiliating from the Labour Party. The period following disaffiliation was marked by rapid and significant decline both in the party's membership, including many of its leading figures, and saw no revival of its parliamentary contingent.[195] As we have seen, the anti-colonial course pursued by the ILP under Maxton and Brockway's leadership brought it into conflict with the mainstream of the Labour Party and the LSI. Post-disaffiliation, the ILP continued this trajectory as part of its 'revolutionary' programme, characterising the League of Nations as an unalterable capitalist organisation and viewing the mandates system, including the Palestine mandate, as an instrument of imperialism. However, the party neglected to formulate any kind of detailed policy regarding Palestine and British policy there did not command much attention.

Initially, even the Palestinian Arab revolt, which began with a general strike in April 1936 was seemingly ignored. However, in the summer of 1936, Brockway initiated a symposium inviting views from those connected with the IBRSU and under Brockway's editorship, the *New Leader* began to discuss Palestine and in October, the ILP leadership formulated a detailed policy. The ILP's report on Palestine authored by Brockway, Maxton, Stephen and McGovern stated its total objection to both 'the British administration and the mandatory system' and called for the immediate withdrawal of British troops and the termination of the mandate.[196] The mandate was 'annexation' carried out to protect the route to India, control the Eastern Mediterranean and to 'guard the oil of Mosul'. Parallels were made with other recently relinquished British mandates as the report declared that 'any camouflaged independence on the lines of Egypt and Iraq' must be opposed.[197] However, in the short term, the goal should be to 'achieve all possible concessions'.[198] As we have seen, the ILP sought to influence government policy by submitting its report to the Royal Commission on Palestine.[199] The ILP view was voiced at the 1936 Labour Party conference by ILPer Gossip, who addressed the conference in his capacity as the general secretary of the National Amalgamated Furnishing Trades Association. He told delegates that he was 'opposed to the mandatory system in every respect', arguing that Britain had no right to be in Palestine and

[195] For a detailed analysis of the post-disaffiliation membership figures see Gidon Cohen, *Failure of A Dream*, p. 31.
[196] ILP, *Socialist Policy for Palestine: Report of the Special Commission of the Independent Labour Party* (London, 1936), p. 4.
[197] Ibid.
[198] Ibid.
[199] 'ILP Report For Palestine Commission', *Glasgow Herald*, 29 October 1936; 'MPs to Visit Palestine', *The Times*, 5 January 1937.

rejected the notion that such a right could not be conferred upon Britain by other nations.[200] At the IBRSU congress held in Brussels in late 1936, a resolution was passed which condemned the mandates system as a 'hypocritical device for concealing the brutal realities of Empire' and strongly criticised the mainstream labour parties for their support of the system.[201] The British government's decision to significantly increase its military presence was viewed not as a necessary security measure but rather as a pretext for the 'concentration of British armed forces to protect imperialist interests'.[202]

However, after visiting Palestine in early 1937, McGovern's views transformed. Impressed by the activities of Labour Zionism, he now argued that Britain, having agreed to the mandate, was 'honour bound' to carry out its pledge to continue to facilitate Jewish immigration into Palestine.[203] Indeed, McGovern even argued that the British government should permit Jewish immigration into neighbouring British-controlled Transjordan.[204] McGovern's remarks resulted in the MP being strongly criticised at the ILP national conference by delegates who emphasised that ILP policy was 'for the liberation of all suppressed people and opposed to the Mandate system'.[205]

In the wake of the repression of the nationalist uprising in Palestine, one source of vocal opposition to the Palestine mandate emanated from the ILP's pacifist wing. Reginald Reynolds, secretary of the No More War Movement (NMWM), penned several strident articles and letters which strongly condemned British rule in Palestine and demanded immediate self-determination for Palestinian Arabs.[206] Reynolds characterised Britain's use of force to maintain the mandate as 'governmental terrorism' comparable to the regimes of Hitler and Mussolini.[207] He was critical of the Labour Party's position that the Palestine mandate had to be maintained 'in the interests of peace in the world', declaring that Labour's position amounted to 'crude imperialism' masquerading as internationalism.[208] He was also

[200] Quoted in Stanley Harrison, *Alex Gossip* (London, 1962), p. 55.
[201] *A Lead to World Socialism: Report of Revolutionary Socialist Congress Brussels, October 31-November 2nd, 1936* (London, 1936), pp. 29-30.
[202] Ibid., p. 30.
[203] H.C. Deb., 14 June 1938, vol. 337, col. 171.
[204] Ibid.
[205] 'The Palestine Problem: ILP Policy is Clear', *New Leader,* 14 April 1939. The ILP Guild of Youth also produced a pamphlet criticising McGovern's views, see Gorni, *British Labour Movement and Zionism*, p. 156.
[206] Reynolds was elected secretary of the NMWM in 1932, see Martin Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists: The British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1854–1945* (Oxford, 2000), p. 289.
[207] Reginald Reynolds, 'The Situation in Palestine', *Spain and the World,* 1938, p. 16.
[208] Ibid., 'Palestine and Socialist Policy', p. 22.

extremely critical of McGovern's stance, denouncing the latter's support for British authority in Palestine as 'fascist'.[209] In addition, Reynolds echoed Cocks' arguments from a decade earlier that the mandate had come into existence 'in defiance of the covenant of the League of Nations itself'. This was because as an 'A' mandate Palestine should have received 'only such outside advice and assistance as the people required and asked for from a Mandatory power of their own selection'.[210] Instead, the country had been 'governed as a colony'.[211] Another ILPer and pacifist Ethel Mannin, also resolutely supported the Palestinian Arabs' claim to self-determination.[212] Mannin condemned the proposals to partition Palestine and protested that 'Nobody gets a conscience about Arabs whose homes are blown up by British troops in Palestine'.[213] In the *New Leader*, Brockway also condemned the British policy of collective punishment against Palestinian Arabs as analogous to fascism and 'Prussianism'.[214]

When the Peel Commission recommended the partition of Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state, the ILP parliamentary group was united in opposition to the policy.[215] As Campbell Stephen told parliament, 'Honourable members of my party absolutely refuse to accept the principle of partition'.[216] He argued that there was 'no evidence' to support the claim that partition would lead to 'peace between the two communities'. 'In fact', Stephen maintained, 'the evidence is all against it'.[217] In addition, he suggested that the British government should consider transferring the mandate to the USA or France.[218] In the *New Leader*, Brockway outlined the party's objections. First, he reiterated the claim that partition would 'stabilise the antagonism between Arabs and Jews'. Secondly, he argued that if war broke out there was 'a very real possibility' that Palestinian Arabs would unite with neighbouring Arab states 'to sweep over the Jewish state'.[219] Brockway also attacked the PMC for its report which endorsed partition, claiming that its recommendations 'shows up the hypocrisy of the whole mandate system'. Its recommendation that separate Arab and

[209] Reynolds, 'Palestine and Socialist Policy', p. 22.
[210] Reynolds, 'Conspiracy on Palestine', p. 49.
[211] Ibid.
[212] Mannin joined the ILP in 1933, see Andy Croft, 'Ethel Mannin, the Red Rose of Love and the Red Flower of Liberty' in Angela Ingram and Daphne Patai (eds.), *Rediscovering Forgotten Radicals British Women Writers 1899–1939* (London, 1993), p. 212.
[213] Ethel Mannin, *Privileged Spectator* (London, 1939), p. 268.
[214] Fenner Brockway, 'British Prussianism in Palestine', *New Leader,* 5 November 1937.
[215] H.C. Deb, 21 July 1937, vol. 326, col. 2348.
[216] Ibid.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Ibid., col. 2349.
[219] Brockway, 'Partition of Palestine', *New Leader,* 27 August 1937.

Jewish states would remain under British control 'for defence and the administration of foreign affairs' would mean that they would 'remain pawns to be used in the game of British Imperialism'.[220]

In May 1939, the British government once again issued a White Paper on Palestine which rejected partition and instead proposed to set a definite limit on Jewish immigration and create an independent Palestinian state within 10 years. When the white paper was debated in parliament, Maxton rejected the plans and instead called for the immediate end of the mandate. Maxton was deeply sceptical of government claims that the situation would be more favourable in 10 years' time, pointing out that it had become a more complex problem in the previous decade. Rejecting the philosophy underpinning the mandate system, he maintained that it was 'impertinence' to assume that Britain was capable 'either of tutelage' or 'conferring self-government' in Palestine. For Maxton, previous pledges were irrelevant: 'What does it matter what Balfour said 20 years ago? What does it matter what McMahon wrote?' he asked the House of Commons.[221] Instead, he called on the British government to demonstrate its professed commitment to democracy by relinquishing its control over Palestine. For Maxton, class unity between working-class Arabs and Jews in a democratic Palestine could overcome national and racial divisions and there would be a joint struggle 'for an entirely new social order'. Regarding the future of the Jewish community in Palestine, Maxton argued that Jews would form a relatively significant minority, in conditions which were considerably more favourable than those experienced by Jewish communities elsewhere in the world.[222] Maxton concluded by asserting that the British Empire was in decline: 'Do not let us imagine that in these days the British are capable of managing the affairs of people in all corners of the globe'.[223] Again, there were divisions in the party. Brockway was not entirely in agreement with Maxton, expressing concerns that his colleague may have 'gone too far' in his stance.[224]

Conclusion

Within the Labour movement, diametrically contrasting views on the mandates system emerged. As we have seen, some saw the system as necessary to secure peace, others argued

[220] Ibid.
[221] H.C. Deb., 23 May 1939, vol. 347, col. 2163.
[222] Ibid.
[223] Ibid.
[224] Quoted in Gorni, *British Labour Movement and Zionism*, p. 156.

that it would inevitably lead to violent repression and war. Some viewed it as a means of ending imperialism whereas others maintained that it was an instrument of imperialism.

This complexity of the problem was illustrated by the difficulty of the issue of self-determination. Unlike in British mandates such as Iraq, the demand for self-government in Palestine was complicated by the fact that this would be incompatible with the Jewish national home. This prompted Labour intellectuals from very similar political backgrounds who had previously championed self-determination as a central principle in the new international order to reassess the issue. As we have seen, Brailsford although deeply sympathetic to Zionist claims initially supported the right of self-determination for Palestinian Arabs before discarding it in favour of population transfer. Nor was this a fringe view, as Snell also advocated transfer. Angell came to regard the idea of national self-determination as too narrow and unworkable. Wedgwood was opposed to self-government based upon majoritarian rule, arguing that such a 'pseudo-democracy' would be 'very dangerous'.[225] He justified this position by arguing that certain preconditions had to be met, such as that the native population were capable of participating and that there was no danger that the majority would exploit or racially oppress the minority.[226] Cocks, however, maintained that Palestinian Arab self-determination was paramount and saw Britain's support for Zionism as a violation of that principle. Both sides of the debate often sought to demonstrate that their stance was consistent with international law as stipulated by Covenant and the articles of the mandate. Despite its severe criticism of Labour's policy in India, the ILP leadership seemed reluctant to criticise the second Labour government over its actions in Palestine. Policy was essentially reactive, as serious engagement was largely prompted by episodes of violence in Palestine in 1929 and 1936. Arguably, this apparent neglect can be attributed to its complex and polarizing nature. The administration for mandates was very much an exercise in continuity. In both spells in government there was no fundamental change. For example, the suggestions for innovation which would have extended rule to colonies were not pursued, nor was the suggestion that mandates should be administered by the foreign office rather than the colonial office to indicate that these were international rather than colonial matters.[227] The League of Nations was one force which contributed towards this

[225] 'Palestine Matters', *Jewish Chronicle*, July 1928.
[226] Ibid.
[227] Leading pacifist Arthur Ponsonby was an advocate of this idea, see H.C. Deb, 18 February 1926 vol. 191, col. 2231.

continuity, both in general and specific terms. When Roden Buxton raised the issue of extending rule to the colonies, representatives of the PMC discouraged the idea. Moreover, when an attempt was made by the second Labour government to alter British policy in Palestine, the PMC emerged as a major opponent.

Chapter 5: The ILP, Anti-Semitism and Palestine, 1918-1939

This chapter will explore how attitudes towards Jews and their experience of anti-Semitism in Britain and Europe informed the debate around Zionism and Palestine. There is often an assumption that support for Zionism stemmed, at least in part, from a sympathy with Jews and anti-Zionism from an antipathy towards Jews. We can see an example of this in Francis Beckett's assessment of Labour MP Hugh Dalton, in which Beckett incorrectly assumed that Dalton's advocacy of Zionism indicated that he had abandoned his anti-Semitic views.[1] However, the reality was considerably more complex. As Sharman Kadish has noted, to equate interwar anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism and pro-Zionism with philo-Semitism is an oversimplification given that many anti-Semites supported Zionism because it provided a pretext 'for the removal of European Jewry *en masse* to a glorified ghetto in the Middle East'.[2] For this reason, amongst others, Zionism proved to be a deeply divisive question within the Jewish communities of Britain and Europe. For some Jews, Zionism was deemed to be incompatible with their understanding of internationalism. As a Jewish speaker at a *Poale Zion* meeting in 1923 observed, the organisation was attempting to appeal 'to the large number' of Jews for whom a 'misplaced ideal of internationalism was an obstacle to them becoming Zionist'.[3] Indeed, some of the movement's most ardent sceptics and critics were left-wing Jews, such as Joseph Leftwich in Britain and Friedrich Adler in Austria.[4] The division was illustrated within the Gaster family. Jack Gaster, who joined the ILP in 1926 and led the Revolutionary Policy Committee faction post-disaffiliation, was anti-Zionist, whereas his father Moses Gaster (the Chief Rabbi of Sephardic Jews in England) was a founder and president of the English Zionist Federation.[5] Furthermore, Deborah Osmond has noted that for many British Jews, the nascent Soviet Union rather than a Jewish national home in

[1] Francis Beckett, *Fascist in the Family: The Tragedy John Beckett MP* (London, 2016), p. 69. In fact, Dalton continued to express overtly anti-Semitic views, see Isaac Kramnic and Barry Sheerman, *Harold Laski: A Life on the Left* (London, 1993), p. 207.
[2] Sharman Kadish, *Bolsheviks and British Jews: The Anglo-Jewish Community, Britain and the Russian Revolution* (London, 1992), p. 140.
[3] 'Meeting of Poale-Zionists', *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 June 1923.
[4] For Adler's views see Jack Jacobs, *On Socialists and the Jewish Question After Marx* (London, 1992), p. 113. Leftwich was a member of the ILP and *Poale Zion* and in 1920 became the London editor of the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*. See Kadish, *Bolsheviks and British Jews*, p. 235. Leftwich, a prolific Yiddish scholar, became a critic of Zionism, favouring a Territorialist solution.
[5] Gidon Cohen, *Failure of a Dream: The Independent Labour Party from Disaffiliation to World War II* (London, 2007), p. 82; David Cesarani, 'The Politics of Anglo-Jewry Between the Wars', in Daniel J. Elazar (ed.), *Authority, Power and Leadership in Jewish Polity* (London, 1991), p. 154.

Palestine came to be regarded as 'the safest haven against political anti-Semitism'.[6] Therefore, this chapter will examine the complexities of the relationship between anti-Semitism and both pro-and anti-Zionist thought.

To understand the origins of several key themes which shaped much of the discourse in the interwar years, it is necessary to begin with an examination of the labour movement's attitudes towards Jews in the years prior to and including the First World War. Of particular significance are the left's perceptions of Jewish immigration and its analysis of the Boer War.

Anti-Imperialism, Immigration and Anti-Semitism, 1900-1918

The extent of anti-Semitism within the British Labour movement at the turn of the century is contested. For instance, Colin Holmes, while acknowledging its existence and citing several examples, has argued that its prevalence has been exaggerated.[7] However, more recent works have reiterated the pervasiveness of anti-Semitism. For example, Neil Redfern argued that anti-Semitism played a 'significant part' in the ILP's opposition to the Boer War.[8] Similarly, Stefan Berger concluded that Labour activists in places like London and Leeds 'spoke the language of anti-Semitism' in their 'vociferous campaigns' to oppose immigration.[9] Anti-Semitic concepts unquestionably recurrently featured in debates regarding imperialism and immigration. As Paul Ward has shown, in its opposition to the Boer War, the ILP's paper the *Labour Leader* carried articles claiming that the pro-war, jingoistic newspapers were owned and financed by Jews.[10] Ward has also noted that J. A. Hobson's anti-imperialist critique, which proved to be profoundly influential within the labour movement, also included anti-Semitic allusions which 'seemed to back the antisemitism with empirical evidence'.[11] According to Ward, Holmes 'underestimated' the degree of anti-Semitism displayed by the ILP.[12] Similarly, Stephen Howe concluded that Brailsford adopted a 'markedly anti-Semitic tone' when opposing the Boer War.[13] There is however, some questionable scholarship in this

[6] Deborah Osmond, 'British Jewry and Labour Politics 1918-1939', in Christine Collette and Stephen Bird (eds.), *Jews, Labour and the Left: 1918-48* (London, 2000), p. 62. See also Elaine Rosa Smith, 'East End Jews in Politics 1918-1939', Unpublished PhD Thesis, (University of Leicester, 1990), pp. 200-203.
[7] Colin Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society, 1876-1939* (London, 1979), p. 24.
[8] Neil Redfern, *Class or Nation: Communists, Imperialism and the Two World Wars* (London, 2005), p. 24.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Paul Ward, *Red Flag and Union Jack: Englishness, Patriotism and the British Left, 1881-1924* (London, 1998), p. 67.
[11] Ibid., pp. 67-8.
[12] Ibid., p. 67, footnote 56.
[13] Howe, *Anti-Colonialism in British Politics*, p. 38.

area. For instance, Robert Wistrich erroneously attributed an anti-Semitic quotation regarding the nature of imperialism to Keir Hardie.[14]

British Labour's response to immigration, which was predominantly Jewish, was deeply ambivalent. During the 1890s, the TUC had repeatedly backed legislation to restrict immigration, prompting a robust response from Jewish trade unionists.[15] The ILP's response was mixed. While the *Labour Leader* 'firmly rejected' the proposals, the prominent ILPer trade union leaders Tom Mann and Ben Tillett not only supported immigration controls but did so in explicitly anti-Semitic terms.[16] In an ILP pamphlet which outlined the party's opposition to immigration restrictions and argued that on the whole, migration was beneficial for Britain, Henry Snell wrote sympathetically of 'the Jewish tailor flying [sic.] from injustice and persecution' and complained that against Jewish migrants in London's East End 'there exists a prejudice that corrupts all Gentile reasoning'.[17] Yet he saw no prejudicial thinking at work in his own insistence that 'The rich Jew... has done his best to besmirch the fair name of England, and to corrupt the sweetness of our national life and character'.[18] In effect, Snell deployed anti-Semitic tropes in an effort to defend Jewish workers.

When the Aliens Act was brought before parliament in 1905, it was opposed by the Labour contingent. Keir Hardie's speech during this debate revealed some of the inherent tensions and ambiguities regarding this issue. Although opposed to this particular bill, Hardie made it clear that he was not opposed to immigration restrictions in principle. Indeed, central to his argument for rejecting the government's legislation was that it did not propose to refuse entry to migrants brought into Britain as strike-breakers or to undercut wages and Hardie had moved an amendment to add a clause addressing these issues.[19] However, alongside this was an unequivocal defence of recent Jewish migrants against the accusation that they were a

[14] Robert Wistrich, *From Ambivalence to Betrayal: The Left, the Jews and Israel* (Nebraska, 2012), p. 205. The comments Wistrich attributed to Hardie in the ILP's *Labour Leader* were in fact written by H. G. Massingham and approvingly quoted in the SDF's newspaper *The Clarion,* see Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society*, p. 68.
[15] Karin Hoffmeester, *Jewish Workers and the Labour Movement 1870-1914* (Aldershot, 2004), p. 206.
[16] Satnam Virdee, 'Socialist Antisemitism and its Discontents in England, 1884-98', *Patterns of Prejudice* 51 (2017), p. 368. Tom Mann was general secretary of the ILP from 1894 to 1898. Tillett was a founder member of the ILP and an early parliamentary candidate. Virdee argues that at this time Tillett formulated a 'proto-fascist' discourse, see: Idem.
[17] Henry Snell, *The Foreigner in England: An Examination of the Problem of Alien Immigration* (London, 1904), pp. 3-4.
[18] Ibid., p. 3.
[19] House of Commons Debates, 2 May 1905, vol. 145, col. 782.

financial burden on the British state, or possessed a propensity for criminality, as well as an impassioned plea to provide refuge to Jews being persecuted in Eastern Europe:

> And so those poor creatures who have been shot down in the streets of Warsaw and other parts of Russia, those poor poverty-stricken human beings who have been hunted down as beasts of prey, are to be condemned by this Bill to remain in a country that does not know how to treat them? … Taking the immigrants for last year, you will find the overwhelming proportion of the increase is in the refugees from Russia and Poland. It is certain that the bulk of those people will be poor people who will be kept out under this Bill, and are we to say to those poor creatures that England of all lands under the sun is no resting place for them from the conditions now prevailing in their own country? [20]

Another noteworthy episode was the anti-Jewish rioting of 1911 in South Wales, which took place during the 'Great Labour Unrest'. This incident has been the subject of scholarly debate. Geoffrey Alderman charged ILP activists with playing a significant role during these events, by engaging in what he termed 'rich Jew anti-Semitism'.[21] However, William D. Rubinstein subsequently challenged this interpretation, arguing that the evidence cited by Alderman had failed to support this claim.[22]

As foreign policy perspectives were developed, many of these themes continued to be articulated. In Brailsford's critique of British foreign policy *The War of Steel and Gold,* one reason cited for objecting to Britain's alliance with Tsarist Russia was the regime's oppression of its Jewish population.[23] However, this was followed by references to 'Hebrew financiers' and the attribution of Britain's occupation of Egypt to the 'Rothschild influence'.[24] Thus, Brailsford's political thought provides an instructive example of how a particular variant of anti-Semitism could co-exist with pro-Zionist sentiments, as he was an early champion of Zionism, endorsing the movement even prior to the publication of the Balfour Declaration in a book which outlined his hopes for the post-war international order.[25] Brailsford called for the creation of an 'autonomous province with a Jewish Administration

[20] Ibid.
[21] Geoffrey Alderman, 'The Anti-Jewish Riots of August 1911 in South Wales', *Welsh History Review* 6 (1972), pp. 190-200.
[22] W. D. Rubinstein, 'The Anti-Jewish Riots of 1911 in South Wales: A Re-examination', *Welsh History Review* 18 (1997), pp. 683-684.
[23] H.N. Brailsford, *The War of Steel and Gold: A Study of the Armed Peace* (London, 1914), p. 45.
[24] Ibid., p. 54 and p. 105.
[25] Brailsford, *A League of Nations* (London, 1917), pp. 172-3.

under an international guarantee' in Palestine.[26] Furthermore, he hoped that the League of Nations would promote Jewish immigration which would eventually result in the creation of a Jewish state. However, this was a secondary concern compared with securing equal rights for Europe's Jewish populations.[27]

As we have seen in previous chapters, there was a strong current within the ILP which opposed the First World War. Some opponents of the war cited the rise of anti-Semitism in Eastern and Central Europe as part of their anti-militarist rationale. Fenner Brockway argued that for Jews, the conflict had resulted in 'an increase of the oppression from which their people have for generations suffered'.[28] Furthermore, he voiced strong opposition to the government's proposals to deport Jewish refugees from Russia who refused to be conscripted into the British army.[29] Yet, an example of a very different response could be found in Scotland, where critiques of the war often centred on protesting against the adverse impact of the war upon working-class communities. When criticising the increase in interest rates in an article in the Scottish ILP's paper *Forward*, John Wheatley, a leading 'Clydesider', imbued his analyses with overtly anti-Semitic tropes:

> Rothschild could pay his share cash down, but as a partner it is necessary for you to borrow your share from Rothschild. Since you are poor Rothschild won't lend you the money so therefore the government has to borrow it for you and Rothschild insists on this method of carrying out the transaction. Because, with all the shrewdness of Abie, Isaac and Moses on his head, he knows that the government is in a better position than he to make the regulations as will enforce you to pay the Jew his pound of flesh.[30]

However, these comments did not go unchallenged. Numerous correspondents criticised Wheatley's anti-Semitic remarks, who responded by issuing what one biographer has described as a 'less than convincing' apology.[31]

[26] Ibid., p. 327.
[27] Ibid., pp. 172-3.
[28] Fenner Brockway, 'The Conscription of Friendly Aliens', *The Tribunal*, 9 November 1916.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Quoted in John Hannan, *The Life of John Wheatley* (Nottingham, 1988), p. 59.
[31] Ibid.

Pro-Zionism, Anti-Zionism and Anti-Semitism, 1918-1932

As we have seen, Labour's War Aims Memorandum made a pro-Zionist stance official party policy, which was subsequently reiterated through various resolutions and policy statements. Examining the discourse of some of Zionism's most enthusiastic supporters, it is clear why many in the Jewish community expressed concerns about its implications. For instance, Wedgwood clearly saw Jews as a separate 'race' and spoke of the desirability of 'Jewish repatriation' to Palestine.[32] When addressing a meeting of Jews in the East End of London, Wedgwood deliberately referred to his audience as 'Jews' as opposed to 'fellow citizens' or 'Englishmen', claiming that on this occasion these remarks were met with approval by his audience.[33] Nonetheless, such rhetoric echoed contemporary anti-Semitic notions of Jews as a racialised 'other'. As Kelemen has shown, despite Wedgwood's 'philo-semitism', he nevertheless considered Jews to be 'unassimilable' and to possess 'many of the characteristics' which anti-Semites ascribed to Jews.[34] Another example of Wedgwood's stereotyping of Jews can be found in his claim that the 'Anglo-Saxon race' had many similarities with Jews: 'We are both moneylenders and unpopular; we, too, are wanderers among strange peoples; we too are traders, and if we look down on those with whom we trade, that is only what the Jews do too'.[35] Wedgwood also unsympathetically remarked to a Jewish audience that if Zionism was not successfully realised:

> 'What's wrong with them, the world will ask?... Can't they be men? Can't they act and do things? You complain of anti-Semitism now. I tell you if I were a Jew, I'd rather have the anti-Semitism that springs from fear or hatred… rather than the anti-Semitism that would spring from pity and contempt'.[36]

While holding these prejudiced views, Brailsford and Wedgwood did respond forcefully to the violent persecution of Jews in Eastern Europe. Brailsford, who had witnessed first-hand the persecution of Jews in Poland, wrote a series of articles and letters in the national press

[32] 'Wedgwood Favors Jewish Homeland', *New York Times*, 4 February 1918.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Kelemen, 'Labour Ideals and Colonial Pioneers', p. 36.
[35] Quoted in C. V. Wedgwood, *The Last of the Radicals: Josiah Wedgwood, M.P.* (London, 1951), p. 181.
[36] 'With the Zionists – in Sydney and Abroad', *The Hebrew Standard of Australasia*, 20 June 1924.

decrying the violence, and addressed protest demonstrations.[37] Similarly, in parliament, Wedgwood repeatedly raised the issue of anti-Jewish persecution in Poland and Hungary.[38]

These pogroms were significant in two key respects. First, the events strengthened the rationale for the necessity of Zionism as a means by which Jews could escape persecution. As far as Wedgwood was concerned, contemporary persecution of Jews 'did not materially differ' from that of the Middles Ages. It was therefore the duty of 'every fearless supporter of human rights' to assist the Zionist movement in order to 'insure... the continued existence of the Jewish people'.[39] On another occasion he told his audience that the 'Red and White terrors in Eastern Europe' explained why Britain supported 'establishing a haven for the oppressed Jewish people'.[40] For Wedgwood, Zionism was a key component in reducing anti-Semitism in another respect, namely that it would improve life for Jewish communities in Europe. He believed that only by Jews having a 'creditable place among the nations' could they 'secure recognition and respect for those of their brethren in other lands'.[41]

Secondly, it framed the way in which violence in Palestine was viewed. When intercommunal violence broke out in the early 1920s, rather than viewing the violence as an expression of legitimate Arab nationalist sentiment, these episodes were characterised as anti-Jewish pogroms of a piece with those in Eastern Europe. Thus, Wedgwood described the riots in Jerusalem in April 1920 as a 'pogrom' and raised the question of British complicity.[42] In a similar vein, he told parliament that the violence in Jaffa in May 1921 had been incited by the Palestinian Arab ruling class to protect their own interests, which was 'the history of pogroms all over the world'.[43] Accordingly, any concession to Palestinian Arab nationalism regarding the level of Jewish immigration into Palestine would be 'the worst possible policy to pursue' as it amounted to 'putting a premium on the pogroms'.[44] Furthermore, Wedgwood cited the

[37] H.N. Brailsford, 'The Polish Pogroms', *The Times*, 23 May 1919; 'Polish Pogroms', *The Times*, 27 June 1919; William D. Rubinstein and Hilary L. Rubinstein, *Philosemitism: Admiration and Support in the English-Speaking World for Jews, 1840-1939* (London, 1999), p. 80. The authors incorrectly describe Brailsford as a Labour MP.
[38] House of Commons Debates, 27 May 1919, vol. 116, col. 1060; Idem., 17 June 1920, vol. 130, cols. 1437-8.
[39] 'Colonel Wedgwood Visits Pittsburgh in Interest of United Palestine Appeal', *Jewish Criterion*, 29 January 1926.
[40] 'Zionists Honour Colonel Wedgwood', *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 29 January 1926.
[41] 'Colonel Wedgwood Visits Pittsburgh in Interest of United Palestine Appeal', *Jewish Criterion*, 29 January 1926.
[42] H.C. Deb., 27 April 1920, vol. 128, col. 1022.
[43] Ibid., 14 June 1921, vol. 143, col. 308.
[44] Ibid.

events to support his claim that Britain must not create genuine self-governing institutions, stating: 'so long as you have pogroms going on in Jaffa and Jerusalem… we cannot possibly surrender complete self-government to the people of that country'.[45] In denouncing the violence which broke out in Jerusalem in the late 1920s, Brailsford recalled the Polish pogroms when he wrote that the British government 'just like the inexperienced Polish Republic' had failed 'to protect the Jews under its care from organised massacre'.[46]

After the First World War, like in 1905, the ILP parliamentary contingent opposed the attempts to further strengthen the provisions of the Aliens Act, which again disproportionately targeted Jews (both the existing community as well as new migrants) and was often accompanied by anti-Semitic rhetoric.[47] Wedgwood emerged as an outspoken opponent of these measures.[48] As David Cesarani has shown, in the post-war period there was a definite anti-Semitic current in the Conservative party, which caused 'deep anxiety' within the Jewish community.[49] Indeed, on more than one occasion Labour's first Jewish MP Emmanuel Shinwell was subjected to anti-Semitic taunts in parliament by Conservative MPs.[50] In the House of Commons, ILPer John Scurr repeatedly led unsuccessful attempts to amend the government's immigration legislation.[51] A central objection for Scurr was the discriminatory impact against 'one particular section of the community, that is the members, and particularly the poorer members, of the Jewish community'.[52] Scurr, who represented the constituency of Mile End in London's East End, voiced the concerns of many of his Jewish constituents when he told parliament that there was 'always the danger of this [legislation] being used as a weapon of anti-Semitism… The Jewish community in the East End think that, not merely the present Home Secretary, but the Home Office, all the way through, has displayed a habit of mind which is distinctly anti-Semite [sic]'.[53] He was also an advocate of Zionism, likening the movement to the Irish struggle for self-determination.[54]

[45] H.C. Deb., 9 March 1922, vol. 151, col. 1580
[46] Brailsford, 'Our Duty to Palestine', *New Leader*, 30 August 1929.
[47] H.C. Deb., 22 October 1919, vol. 120, col. 80.
[48] H.C. Deb., 15 April 1919, vol. 114, col. 2790. Ibid., 22 Oct 1919, vol. 120, cols. 83-4.
[49] David Cesarani, 'Joynson-Hicks and the Radical Right in England after the First World War' in Tony Kushner and Kenneth Lunn (eds.), *Traditions of Intolerance: Historical Perspectives on Race Discourse and Fascism in Britain* (Manchester, 1989), p. 118.
[50] 'Shinwell, Jewish Labourite in MacDonald Cabinet', *JTA*, 24 January 1924; 'Jewish Daily Bulletin News Letter', *JTA*, 8 July 1928.
[51] 'House of Commons Rejects Labor Resolution to Abolish Alien Restriction Act', *JTA*, 15 December 1924.
[52] H.C. Deb., 17 November 1925, vol. 118, col. 227.
[53] H.C. Deb., 29 July 1926, vol. 198, col. 2469.
[54] 'British Labor Movement Backs Zionist Endeavors, Party Leaders Declare', *JTA*, 17 July 1928.

Overtly anti-Semitic discourse persisted into the inter-war period amongst several proponents of Zionism, the most prominent of whom was Ramsay MacDonald. Like Brailsford, MacDonald's anti-Semitism coexisted with sympathy for Jews facing violent persecution in Eastern Europe and the sympathetic acknowledgement that one 'spur' of Zionism was the 'physical necessity' of escaping oppression.[55] Nevertheless, MacDonald made a telling remark when he informed a Labour Zionist activist that one reason he was interested in the Zionist movement was because he wanted to ascertain whether 'the Jews as a race' were 'capable of constructive economic work'.[56] Furthermore, in his reports on his visit to Palestine (again, published in *Forward*), MacDonald invoked numerous anti-Semitic tropes in his characterisation of Jews who were opposed to Zionism, including the conspiratorial belief in secret Jewish power. MacDonald spoke of:

> The rich plutocratic Jew… whose views upon life make one anti-Semitic. He has no country, no kindred. Whether as a sweater or a financier, he is an exploiter of everything he can squeeze. He is behind every evil that governments do, and his political authority, always exercised in the dark, is greater than that of parliamentary majorities.[57]

Analysing these comments, Gorni has suggested that MacDonald was influenced by the notorious anti-Semitic forgery the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion'.[58] However, it is more likely that MacDonald's inspiration here was Hobson, as we know that Hobson's arguments regarding imperialism, which as we have seen, were infused with this variant of anti-Semitic discourse, had influenced MacDonald 'a great deal'.[59] As in the case of Snell, Brailsford and Wheatley, provided the anti-Semitic rhetoric was directed exclusively at supposedly affluent Jews rather than Jews *per se*, these sentiments were treated as legitimate anti-capitalist discourse. MacDonald expressed similar sentiments when he told a Labour Zionist activist that the Conservative government was reconsidering its pro-Zionist policy because it was 'more important to win the friendship of the various Arab countries than that of the Jews and

[55] Ramsay MacDonald, *A Socialist in Palestine* (London, 1922), p. 17.
[56] Gorni, *British Labour Movement and Zionism*, p. 29.
[57] MacDonald, *Socialist in Palestine*, p. 6.
[58] Gorni, *British Labour Movement and Zionism*, p. 31.
[59] 'Introduction' in Bernard Barker (ed.), *Ramsay MacDonald's Political Writings* (London, 1972), p. 38. Furthermore, the document had been exposed as a forgery in an investigation published by *The Times* newspaper in August 1921, see Holmes, *Anti-Semitism in British Society*, p. 151.

their money'.[60] He also had these prejudices 'reawakened' when there was significant Zionist opposition to his government's Palestine policy in 1930.[61] This points to an inconsistency on MacDonald's part in the sense that he had previously characterised 'capitalist Jews' as anti-Zionist.

It is striking that when *Poale Zion* collated and published MacDonald's articles as *A Socialist in Palestine*, these unambiguously anti-Semitic remarks were included.[62] Presumably, on this occasion, securing the endorsement of such a prominent Labour figure for the activities of Labour Zionism overrode any concerns regarding the presence of anti-Semitic language. Indeed, MacDonald's anti-Semitic imagination partly informed his support for Zionism. His belief was that Jews, having been 'uprooted' from their homeland of Palestine were in an 'unnatural and unhealthy state of mind' and had thus become 'materialist' and 'cosmopolitan'.[63] By returning the Jews to Palestine, Zionism would remedy this by transforming Jews into 'patriots' and 'idealists'.[64] This was a view was shared by Wedgwood.[65] Furthermore, in the immediate term, Zionism merited support because it supposedly challenged the interests of capitalist Jews.[66] David Cesarani concluded that MacDonald's remarks indicate that this kind of pro-Zionist discourse was not only informed by anti-Semitism but also 'validated anti-Semitic notions and made it possible for socialists who thought themselves opposed to racialism to voice basic slurs against the Jews'.[67]

Another informative example of the pro-Zionist, anti-Semitic phenomena was that of 'Clydesider' MP Neil MacLean. At Labour's annual conference in 1921, MacLean seconded the *Poale Zion* motion which committed Labour to a pro-Zionist position. In his remarks, he indicated that his pro-Zionist stance stemmed from a sympathy for Jewish people. He was in favour of 'self-determination… for this race which has been wandering the globe for so long'. Yet, this was preceded by the self-depreciating but dubious comment: 'some people might wonder why a Scotsman should second the resolution. It was not a question of

[60] Quoted in Gorni, *British Labour Movement and Zionism*, p. 43.
[61] Ibid., p. 80.
[62] MacDonald, *Socialist in Palestine*, p. 6.
[63] Ibid., pp. 4-5.
[64] See Ibid., p. 4 and p. 6.
[65] 'Wedgwood Favors Jewish Homeland', *New York Times*, 4 February 1918.
[66] MacDonald, *A Socialist in Palestine*, p. 6.
[67] David Cesarani, 'Anti-Zionism in Britain, 1922 - 2002: Continuities and Discontinuities', in Jeffrey Hersh (ed.), *Anti-Semitism and Anti-Zionism in Historical Perspective: Convergence and Divergence* (Oxford, 2007), p. 125.

supposed affinity in money matters'.[68] In March 1923, many of the Clydeside MPs opposed a government-backed loan for the cotton industry in Sudan on the basis that it would not provide a solution for unemployment and amounted to public funds subsidising a capitalist scheme. However, MacLean introduced an anti-Semitic dimension. Noting the names of some of the shareholders and directors of the Sudan Plantation Syndicate, MacLean remarked 'No-one could say that people with names like Eckstein were out for the good of the British Empire'. When it was stated that they were from the Highlands, MacLean retorted: 'Yes, the Highlands in Palestine'.[69]

Thus, it is evident that the anti-Semitic notions developed in at the turn of the century persisted well into the interwar period. The pronouncements of Brailsford, MacDonald, Wheatley and MacLean provide us with clear examples of what Cesarani has described as the left's propensity to bifurcate Jews into "good" Jewish workers and "bad" Jewish capitalists and consequently, to engage in 'rich-Jew anti-Semitism'.[70] Furthermore, the vast majority of these figures were openly pro-Zionist. Lansbury and Snell also fell into this category.[71] Indeed, Mann and Tillett, who as we have seen, indulged in anti-Semitism against both Jewish working-class migrants and 'capitalist' Jews both expressed their support for Labour Zionism during the interwar period.[72]

Anti-Zionist discourse too could be infused with anti-Semitic references. One correspondent to the *New Leader* made the case that the Balfour Declaration was 'unjust' citing his opposition to secret diplomacy, support for national self-determination and anti-militarism. The correspondent insisted that 'No one wishes anything but good to the Jewish people, provided the benefits they receive do not involve injustice to others'. However, this claim was somewhat undermined by the inclusion of the anti-Semitic allusion: 'Far from there being any moral duty to persist in… [the Balfour Declaration], the request for such persistence sounds like Shylock's demand for the pound of flesh'.[73] Another anti-Zionist Labourite was E.N. Bennett MP, who was amongst the contingent of Liberal defectors to the

[68] Quoted in Jewish Socialist Labour Party, *British Labour Policy on Palestine: A Collection of Documents, Speeches and Articles, 1917-1938* (London, 1938), p. 20.
[69] 'House of Commons: The Sudan Cotton Guarantee', *Manchester Guardian*, 6 March 1924.
[70] Cesarani, 'Anti-Zionism in Britain', pp. 124-6.
[71] For Lansbury see Cesarani, 'Ibid', p. 125.
[72] For Mann see Andrew Sargent 'The British Labour Party and Palestine 1917-1949', Unpublished PhD Thesis, (University of Nottingham, 1980), p. 32. For Tillett see 'English Poale Zion Conference Interprets MacDonald Letter as Reaffirmation of Balfour Declaration', *JTA*, 11 April 1931.
[73] 'Abandon the Mandate', *New Leader*, 13 September 1929.

ILP.[74] In a letter to the Labour party's Advisory Committee on International Questions, he objected to the party's pro-Zionist stance on the basis that it was contrary to the principle of self-determination and the result of a secret treaty.[75] However, it appears that anti-Semitic motives were also at play. In an article published in the *Jewish Criterion* discussing the anti-Zionist group of MPs in parliament, Bennett was described as 'the only Labour MP… who does not disguise but openly parades his anti-Semitism'.[76] Furthermore, by the end of the 1930s, Bennett was a member of the virulently anti-Semitic 'Right Club'.[77]

Nevertheless, the anti-Zionist line pursued by the ILP leadership of Maxton and Brockway in the late 1920s was undoubtedly motivated far more by anti-colonialism rather than any kind of anti-Semitic attitudes. This was acknowledged by the pro-Zionist *Jewish Chronicle* which characterised Maxton in the following terms: 'Although he has had doubts about the Zionist movement, Mr Maxton it must be admitted has always been pro-Jewish'.[78] Indeed, in the aftermath of the intercommunal violence in Palestine in August 1929, Maxton addressed a mass meeting organised by the English Zionist Federation – not to show support for Zionism – but to express his sympathy and solidarity with the grieving Anglo-Jewish community.[79] In spite of his longstanding opposition to imperialism and militarism, Brockway voted for the Labour government's enhanced security measures in Palestine on the basis that these were required to protect the Jewish community in the aftermath of the aforementioned violence.[80]

Like Maxton, Brockway also placed Palestine in an anti-colonial framework, stating in 1931 that the ILP had 'never been satisfied… with the policy which the Labour Government has been conducting in Palestine, just in the same way as we have not been satisfied with its policy in India'.[81] However, he also appeared to echo anti-Semitic anti-capitalist rhetoric, remarking in the same interview that the Balfour Declaration had been 'issued with a view to winning the support of Jewish capitalism' and thus 'that in itself is a sufficient reason why we

[74] *The Labour Who's Who: A Biographical Directory to the National and Local Leaders in the Labour and Co-operative Movement* (London, 1924), p, 16.
[75] Letter from E.N. Bennett to Leonard Woolf, January 1923, People's History Museum, Manchester, LHASC LSI/156/1.
[76] William Zukerman, 'Zionism in the Balance', *Jewish Criterion*, 6 June 1930.
[77] Richard Griffiths, *Patriotism Perverted: Captain Ramsay, the Right Club and British Anti-Semitism, 1939-1940* (London, 1998), p. 161. Griffiths argued that although Bennett was not an anti-Semite, he was prepared to 'relegate' the fascist persecution of Jews to 'unimportance'.
[78] 'Mr James Maxton Changes His Views', *Jewish Chronicle*, 3 October 1930.
[79] 'Mourning and Protest at the Albert Hall', *Auckland Star*, 23 November 1929.
[80] H.C. Deb., 24 Feb 1930, vol. 235, col. 2007.
[81] 'Palestine Does Not Interest Us as a Specifically Jewish Question', *JTA*, 3 September 1931.

should oppose it'.[82] This was re-iterated when Brockway wrote that the British government's backing for Zionism was motivated not only by strategic, imperialist considerations but also in order to 'secure the support of Jewish populations and particularly Jewish finance during the War'.[83] However, at other times, in subsequent statements, the terms 'Jewish capitalism' or 'Jewish capitalists' referred specifically to the capitalist section of the Jewish community within Palestine which, along with its counterpart Arab feudalism and Arab capitalism, represented a conservative social force in Palestine.[84]

In the late 1920s, the ILP parliamentary group included a small number of Jewish MPs. The most prominent of these was Emanuel Shinwell, who was born in London's East End before moving to Glasgow as a child.[85] He went on to become a prominent trade unionist and ILPer, playing a leading role in the events of 'Red Clydeside' before being elected MP for Linlithgowshire in 1922. Shinwell was not prominent in pro-Zionist activities during the interwar years. As he acknowledged in his memoirs, he had 'done little or nothing in public to help the [Zionist] movement'.[86] While he was not particularly active in the movement itself, Shinwell did make efforts to reassure the Anglo-Jewish community that Labour was committed to a pro-Zionist policy in Palestine. For example, he addressed a meeting of the Jewish communal organisation the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith in London where he assured his audience that the Labour government would 'safeguard Jewish interests in Palestine' and thus there was 'no need for any anxiety'.[87]

Another Jewish MP was Michael Marcus, who represented Dundee from 1929-31. During his short time in parliament, Marcus took a stridently pro-Zionist stance, chairing the all-party parliamentary committee on Palestine and participating in Wedgwood's 'Seventh Dominion'

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[82] Ibid.
[83] 'The View of the ILP: Symposium on Palestine', *Revolutionary Socialist Bulletin,* New Series, No.4, June 1936, pp. 15-16. Brockway repeated this claim in his memoirs, writing that he could not accept the Zionist view because 'Zionism had been a British imperialist instrument and… behind it were power Jewish financial interests'. See Brockway, *Inside the Left*, p. 291.
[84] ILP, *A Socialist Policy for Palestine* (London, 1936), p. 3. See also Campbell Stephen's remarks in parliament, H.C Deb., 21 July 1937, vol. 326, col. 2349.
[85] Emanuel Shinwell, *Conflict Without Malice: An Autobiography* (London, 1955), pp. 13-18. Shinwell also discussed Glasgow's Jewish community, including experiences of anti-Semitism, see Shinwell, *Lead With the Left: My First Ninety-Six Years* (London, 1981), pp. 16-18 and p. 32.
[86] Ibid., p. 226. It appears that Shinwell did not identity as a Zionist. In an interview in the 1980s he noted his friendships with leading Labour Zionists and his support for Israel but remarked 'I've helped them, but I've never been one of them'. See John Doxat, *Shinwell Talking* (London, 1984), p. 62.
[87] 'Labour Will Safeguard Jewish Interests in Palestine', *JTA*, 26 June 1929.

initiative.[88] For Marcus, his support for Zionism was intrinsically connected to his Jewish identity. For instance, intervening in a parliamentary debate in the aftermath of the intercommunal violence of 1929, he strongly criticised MPs who questioned the need for additional military expenditure for Palestine remarking: 'when a crime has been committed against the Jewish people in Palestine, I, as a Jew and as one who is proud of being a Jew, am certainly not going to remain silent'.[89]

Responses to the Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Europe, 1932-1939

When the ILP disaffiliated from the Labour Party, there was no consensus within the ILP on Zionism.[90] In the years immediately following disaffiliation from Labour, the ILP leadership continued to reject Zionism. However, no detailed policy on Palestine emerged. Instead, Brockway promoted the Soviet Union's Jewish settlement scheme in Birobidzhan, contrasting it favourably with Zionism and lauding it as 'the one striking contrast with the Fascist treatment of the Jews'.[91]

The ILP certainly treated the rise of political anti-Semitism seriously. The *New Leader* carried several articles alerting its readers to anti-Semitic incidents in Germany.[92] Ethel Mannin wrote a glowing review of a book by a Jewish author which drew attention to 'the anti-Semitism in our midst'.[93] In addition, it provided a platform for writers to challenge prevalent anti-Semitic myths.[94] Moreover, in 1933, in a move which was reminiscent of the ILP's involvement in the LAI, Maxton and Brockway and Mannin lent their support to the transnational, Münzenberg-initiated, Relief Committee for the Victims of German Fascism.[95] Brockway also backed a US-based transnational network which raised financial support for Jews in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.[96] Individual cases were taken up too, as ILP

[88] William Zukerman, 'Zionism in the Balance', *Jewish Criterion*, 6 June 1930; 'Mufti Sees Jewish National Home Policy Responsible for Riots of Last Summer', *JTA*, 15 April 1930.
[89] H.C. Deb., 24 February 1930, vol. 235, col. 1987.
[90] Brockway identified three diverging perspectives within the ILP, see Gorni, *British Labour Movement and Zionism*, p. 154.
[91] 'Fascist Lies About the Jews', *New Leader*, 8 June 1934.
[92] 'Jew Baiting: Horrible Attacks in Germany Again', *New Leader*, 26 July 1935.
[93] Ethel Mannin, 'The Jew Boy', *New Leader*, 30 August 1935.
[94] 'The Scapegoat', *New Leader*, 22 November 1936.
[95] Susan D. Pennybacker, *From Scotsboro to Munich: Race and Political Culture in 1930s Britain* (Princeton, 2009), pp. 200-201. As with the LAI, the Labour Party proscribed the organisation on the basis that it was dominated by communists, see Caroline Knowles, *Race, Discourse and Labourism* (London, 1992), p. 180, footnote 15.
[96] 'Plan Aid for Jews Declassed in Russia', *New York Times*, 5 April 1931.

MPs repeatedly protested against the persecution of Jewish socialist leader Joseph Kruk by the Polish government.[97]

Furthermore, the party played a leading role in the anti-fascist activities that sought to physically defend the Jewish community in the East End of London, which was being targeted by the British Union of Fascists (BUF). The most notable example of this was the so-called 'Battle of Cable Street' on 4 October 1936 where, in contrast to the Labour Party, the ILP proactively mobilised support for the anti-fascist demonstration.[98] On the eve of the clashes, the ILP convened a 'massive gathering' in London's East End, at which Brockway 'called for an overwhelming demonstration against Mosley'.[99] Moreover, ILP publicity for the demonstration strongly condemned the violent anti-Semitism of the British and European fascist movements.[100] In areas such as the North East where the ILP retained a relatively strong presence post-disaffiliation, its activists repeatedly mobilised against the BUF.[101] The ILP's opposition to political anti-Semitism stemmed from an analysis which saw anti-Semitism as a means of dividing the working class on racial lines and thus undermining class consciousness, as well as misleading workers about the true nature of the capitalist system through its focus on Jewish capitalists.[102]

As we have noted in Chapter Two, Mosley was a leading ILPer prior to his founding of the BUF and several ILPers including two additional former MPs – Robert Forgan and John Beckett – joined Mosley's BUF. It raises the question, what part if any did anti-Semitism play in this phenomenon? Traditionally, it has been argued that anti-Semitism was not initially central to the BUF's ideology and that it was opportunistically adopted as official policy in mid-1934.[103] Furthermore, several scholars have claimed that anti-Semitism was reluctantly adopted by Mosley as a consequence of pressure from others within the BUF.[104]

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[97] 'British Labor Leaders Ask for Release of Polish Jew', *JTA*, 3 February 1927. 'British Group Protests Arrest of Polish Jewish Socialist', *JTA*, 24 December 1937.
[98] Nigel Copsey, *Anti-Fascism in Britain* (London, 2017), p. 50. Copsey concluded that the ILP's contribution has been 'minimised' in the historiography, see: idem., p. 53.
[99] Dave Hann, *Physical Resistance: Or, A Hundred Years of Anti-Fascism* (Winchester, 2013), p .86.
[100] ILP, *They Did Not Pass: 300,000 Workers Say No to Mosley* (London, 1936), p. 5.
[101] Nigel Todd, *In Excited Times: The People Against the Blackshirts* (Whitley Bay, 1995), pp. 12-13.
[102] Keith Hodgson, *Fighting Fascism: The British Left and the Rise of Fascism, 1919-39* (Manchester, 2010), pp. 134-5. See also *A Lead to World Socialism: Report of Revolutionary Socialist Congress Brussels, October 31-November 2nd, 1936* (London, 1936), p. 28.
[103] For a summary of this perspective see Thomas Linehan, *British Fascism, 1918-39: Parties, Ideology and Culture* (Manchester, 2000), p. 187.
[104] Ibid.

However, in a recent study, Daniel Tilles has argued that the BUF was unquestionably anti-Semitic from the outset and that Mosley himself was a major driving force in the espousal of political anti-Semitism.[105] To support his claim, Tilles pointed to Mosley's courting of renowned anti-Semites during his short-lived New Party.[106] Certainly when Mosley openly promoted anti-Semitism, he deployed tropes that were consistent with 'anti-capitalist' anti-Semitism which portrayed Jews as powerful, exploitative capitalists.[107] However, his anti-Semitism was not limited to this, as he also racialised Jews as 'Orientals'.[108]

Beckett's sympathetic biographer has argued that while Beckett's anti-Semitism was plainly present prior to joining the BUF, his anti-Semitism intensified under the influence of Mosley.[109] Beckett, who resigned from the ILP in 1933 before joining the BUF in March 1934, remained a leading BUF activist until 1937. Not long after joining, he deployed rhetoric which conformed to the language of 'left-wing' anti-Semitism, penning an article attacking the Tories for serving the interests of 'cosmopolitan financiers'.[110] His biographer has speculated that his anti-Semitism had indeed developed during his time in the labour movement as a result of his clashes with Jewish industrialist Alfred Mond.[111] Neither of these figures had expressed a view on Zionism during their time with the ILP. However, as leader of the BUF, Mosley advocated what he termed 'compulsory Zionism', which meant the mass deportation of Jews, but not to Palestine or any other area within the British Empire.[112]

The intensification of the persecution of Jews in Europe resulted in a reassessment on Palestine in some key respects. As Maxton admitted in a speech to the House of Commons, the 'refugee problem' had altered his perspective on Palestine to a 'very substantial degree'.[113] In April 1933, he was one of the few MPs to press for immigration controls to be lifted for German Jews migrating into Palestine. Responding to the Nazi regime's introduction of anti-Jewish legislation, Maxton urged the British government to change immigration rules, even if only on a temporary basis, to enable Palestine to become 'an

[105] Daniel Tilles, *British Fascist Antisemitism and Jewish Responses, 1932-40* (London, 2014), p. 77.
[106] Ibid.
[107] 'Sir Oswald Mosley and the Jews', *The Times*, 15 April 1935.
[108] Gisela Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism in England 1918-1939* (London, 1978), p. 96.
[109] Beckett, *Fascist in the Family*, p. 223.
[110] Tilles, *British Fascist Antisemitism*, p. 41.
[111] Beckett, *Fascist in the Family*, p. 69.
[112] Lebzelter, *Political Anti-Semitism in England*, p. 97.
[113] H.C. Deb., 23 May 1939, vol. 347, col. 2163.

asylum for the Jews'.[114] Writing in 1936, while still fundamentally rejecting Zionism and remaining deeply suspicious of British motives for supporting Zionism, Maxton argued that there was an 'urgent need for some place or places on the surface of the globe where Jewish workers can live without having to face daily danger of imprisonment, torture, starvation or butchery'.[115] In addition, he acknowledged that even in countries which did not have fascist governments, conditions were nevertheless 'very difficult' for Jews. Hence, it was 'easy to understand' why Jewish workers were attracted to migrating to Palestine.[116] Maxton's shift in perspective was evident at the ILP's annual conference in March 1937. When a motion on Palestine expressing solidarity with both Arab and Jewish workers only narrowly passed, Maxton fumed that such a 'trivial majority' was 'damnable'. It was 'not good enough', he told delegates, for the ILP 'to say that Jewish socialists after being driven out of Germany and Poland are to be left in Palestine to be murdered with our connivance'.[117]

During the course of 1936, the ILP's official policy significantly evolved. In the summer, a policy statement on Palestine was issued by Brockway which made no mention of the perilous situation for Jews in Europe and counselled left-wing Labour Zionists to consider whether further Jewish immigration into Palestine was desirable if it was a potential impediment to the successful realisation of Arab-Jewish unity.[118] However, this was soon followed by a more comprehensive policy document entitled *A Socialist Policy for Palestine*, co-authored by Maxton, Brockway, McGovern and Stephen which struck a markedly different tone on the question of immigration. The statement stressed that for many Jews in Europe the opportunity to emigrate 'was a matter of life and death'.[119] Birobidzhan, which Brockway had previously championed, was now deemed 'negligible compared with the need' and opportunities in other parts of the world were 'very limited'. Therefore, the report argued that further Jewish immigration into Palestine should be permitted. Nevertheless, even in these circumstances, this right was not perceived to be absolute. Revolutionary socialists, it was claimed, accepted the principle of freedom of migration so long as it did not adversely affect standards of living or 'economic conditions'.[120] Hence, a proviso was added that

[114] H.C. Deb., 3 April 1933, vol. 276, col. 1421.
[115] James Maxton, 'Preface' in Zeev Abramovitch, *Whither Palestine?* (London, 1936), p. 6.
[116] Ibid., p. 7.
[117] 'Mr Maxton's Outburst', *Glasgow Herald*, 31 March 1937.
[118] 'The View of the ILP: Symposium on Palestine', *Revolutionary Socialist Bulletin New Series,* No.4, June 1936, pp. 15-16.
[119] ILP, *A Socialist Policy For Palestine*, p. 5.
[120] Ibid.

employment had to be already guaranteed and that Jewish agricultural and industrial projects created by new migrants must also employ Arab workers. In the long-term, it was hoped that Arab-Jewish workers' organisations could be established which could organise this process and ensure these outcomes. Such proposals did not appear to correspond with the severity of the situation which had been outlined at the beginning of the document. In the attempt to formulate a policy on Jewish immigration which sought to encompass the diverse range of views within the ILP, its leadership produced a contradictory, ambiguous and unrealistic solution.

One influence on Brockway's thinking at this time was George Bernard Shaw. When Brockway consulted Shaw on his views about Palestine, Shaw replied with a brief three-act playlet which concluded with the playwright himself exclaiming 'Another Ulster! As if one were not enough!'. In it, Shaw imagined a conversation in which Balfour promised Palestine to Weizmann (as the de-facto leader of the Zionist movement) in exchange for Weizmann using his scientific expertise to create more effective weapons for Britain's war effort. This was based upon Weizmann's development of synthetic acetone and his war-time work for the British Admiralty and the Ministry of Munitions.[121] The play made several blatantly anti-Semitic references. One example was as follows:

> ARTHUR: Doctor Weizmann, we must have that microbe at your own price. Name it. We shall not hesitate at six figures.
> DR WEIZMANN: I do not ask for money.
> ARTHUR: There must be some misunderstanding. I was informed that you are a Jew.

Here, Shaw was expressing his own prejudice rather than satirising the anti-Semitism of the British ruling class.[122] Brockway's interpretation of Shaw's play was that 'Balfour gave Dr Weizmann Palestine in return for a chemical device for killing Germans'.[123] Although it is unclear whether Brockway was persuaded by this scenario, nevertheless this did broadly chime with Brockway's assessment that the Balfour Declaration was in part, a war-time *quid*

[121] Norman Rose, *Chaim Weizmann: A Biography* (London, 1986), pp. 154-8. Rose describes the claim, which was denied by Weizmann, as a 'well-worn legend', first promulgated by David Lloyd George. See Idem, p. 158.
[122] David Nathan, 'Failure of an Elderly Gentleman: Shaw and the Jews', *Shaw, vol. 11, Shaw and Politics* (1991), pp. 219-238.
[123] Fenner Brockway, *Outside the Right* (London, 1963), p. 87.

pro quo. Furthermore, Brockway regarded Shaw's contribution worthy of publication in the *New Leader*, without any critical editorial commentary on its anti-Semitic content.[124]

Nevertheless, Brockway himself was unequivocal in his condemnation of political anti-Semitism and was evidently profoundly affected by it. In response to Kristallnacht, Brockway issued a letter on behalf of the ILP to the German ambassador protesting against the 'barbarity of the attacks upon the Jews'.[125] He stated that the persecution of Jews was 'barbaric and horrible' to the point that 'one feels so angry about this one is almost ashamed to write it down'.[126] He was critical of the outcome of the Evian conference and argued that socialists had a 'duty to assist the Jewish people in their plight' by striving 'to obtain an open door to Jewish refugees' in their respective countries.[127] Along with the Soviet Union, Palestine was seen as playing an integral role in the solution. Thus, Brockway advocated Jewish migration to Palestine, strongly challenging the left-wing anti-Zionist notion that Jews in Palestine could be regarded as 'Imperialist invaders' who were exploiting the native population.[128] By this point, Brockway appeared to have discarded his previous concerns about Palestine's economic absorptive capacity, emphasising instead that Jewish immigration had resulted in an improvement of the standard of living for Palestinian Arabs. However, Brockway seemed not to have appreciated the magnitude of the refugee crisis, believing that 'thousands' of refugees wanted to enter Palestine.[129] During this period, Brockway was willing to break the law in order to assist refugees, forging passports and other documents to help refugees escape Nazi persecution.[130]

For Maxton, it was simultaneously possible to be opposed to Zionism and to be in favour of increased Jewish immigration into Palestine. This was because, in his view, the solution to the conflict in Palestine would be achieved through the unity of Jewish and Arab workers on a class basis and the eventual inclusion of Palestine within a federation of Arab states. Therefore, the size of the Jewish population in Palestine was not deemed to be an impediment

[124] *New Leader*, 29 November 1936. Brockway later published the play in his second memoir, again without any critical commentary of its anti-Semitic discourse. See Brockway, *Outside the Right*, (London, 1963), pp. 97-99. Brockway referred to Shaw's play again in his later Palestinian solidarity activism, see Brockway letter to 'Free Palestine', 23 April 1969. Brockway papers, Churchill Archives Centre, Cambridge, FEBR 215, Box 42.
[125] 'The Nazi Anti-Jewish Frenzy', *Manchester Guardian*, 14 November 1938.
[126] Brockway, 'Preface' in Mordekhay Orenstein, *Palestine: A Plea for Jewish-Arab Unity* (London, 1939), p. 4.
[127] Ibid.
[128] Ibid., p. 5.
[129] Ibid., p. 6.
[130] Knowles, *Race, Discourse and Labourism* (London, 1992), p. 172.

to this objective. In fact, the immigration of Jewish socialists and trade unionists would only aid this process. Furthermore, contrary to the policy of the Zionist movement, Maxton advocated Jewish migration into a variety of countries, not solely Palestine. In fact, such was Maxton's commitment to aiding Jewish refugees that he went so far as to abandon a key tenet of his longstanding anti-colonial position, namely the paramountcy of self-determination.[131]

In the parliamentary sessions immediately following Kristallnacht, he repeated his demand that the government explore the option of resettling Jewish refugees in Palestine, as well as elsewhere in Britain's 'vast colonial empire'.[132] Although this request was qualified by the proviso that it would be on a temporary basis and would not place 'undue burdens on the district in which they are placed, and without causing additional suffering to the population that is already there'.[133] Maxton again urged that the government make provisions to enable refugees to resettle in Britain and in other areas of the British Empire on a temporary basis, as well as adjusting its Palestine immigration policy to provide a long-term solution. He pressed the government to act with urgency, indicating his frustration at cases where there had been delays in issuing visas, remarking that 'the merit of the individuals can be looked into after their bodies are safe'.[134]

Maxton argued that Britain, as well as other European nations, were able to provide sanctuary for all refugees. Here, Maxton was prepared to concede that it would not be viable to resettle 500,000 Jewish refugees in industrial areas of Britain where unemployment was already at a substantial level. However, he did insist that it was feasible for the Highlands of Scotland to accommodate 500,000 Jewish refugees, maintaining that this option 'had to be considered'.[135] His intervention prompted a rebuke from Germany's Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels, who questioned whether the proposal would be met with approval by the Scottish people.[136] Maxton emerged as one of the labour movement's 'very few' advocates of 'a mass resettlement' of Jewish refugees in Britain.[137] This contrasted with the Labour Party's official policy, as well as that of Europe's social democratic parties, which as Kelemen has noted, all

[131] H.C. Deb., 3 April 1933, vol. 276, col. 1421.
[132] 'Chamberlain Deplores Nazi Pogroms', *JTA*, 15 November 1938.
[133] H.C. Deb., 21 November 1938, vol. 341, col. 1462. His speech was also published in the *New Leader*, see 'Maxton On Refugees', *New Leader*, 25 November 1938.
[134] H.C. Deb., 21 November 1938, vol. 341, col. 1462.
[135] Ibid.
[136] 'British MPs Attacked by Goebbels', *Daily Telegraph*, 23 November 1938.
[137] Kelemen, 'Labour Party and Zionism', p. 83.

refrained from advocating large-scale Jewish immigration into Britain, believing that at a time of high unemployment, such a stance would pose too great an electoral risk.[138]

Therefore, Gorni's claim that Maxton's position remained 'unaffected by the worsening plight of German and Austrian Jewry' is only correct in the sense that he maintained his opposition to the continuation of British rule and the creation of a Jewish-majority state in Palestine.[139] However, Maxton's views regarding the activities of Jewish socialists in Palestine and the necessity of increased Jewish immigration into Palestine and elsewhere evidently were revised.

Others, however, remained inflexible on the question of Jewish immigration into Palestine. For instance, ILP intellectual Reginald Reynolds argued that 'our sympathy with Jews in Germany and many other countries must not blind us… for one moment to the reactionary character of Zionism'.[140] He maintained that there was no contradiction in this stance, writing: 'The very reasons that make one pro-Jew and anti-Nazi in Germany, lead logically to the pro-Arab anti-Zionist position in Palestine'.[141] For Reynolds, it was essential for socialists to defend the right of the Palestinian Arabs to 'determine their own affairs, including matters of immigration'.[142] He argued that the fundamental question was not one of whether one approved of Jewish immigration but rather 'who shall decide on its extent?'. It was, he wrote, currently being 'determined by a foreign government… at the point of a bayonet'. Therefore, Reynolds argued that Jewish immigration into Palestine had to be distinguished from Jewish immigration into other countries – and rejected by socialists – on the basis that it was 'a forcible colonisation of a foreign country'.[143] Reflecting on this period in his memoirs, Reynolds recalled that a central reason why he was so strongly opposed to Zionism was because it 'exploited the sympathy of decent people for Hitler's victims and diverted it to the justification of an outrage perpetrated on the Arabs of Palestine'.[144] In a similar vein, Alex Gossip demanded immediate independence for Palestine, accusing the British government of 'taking advantage of the hardships that are being inflicted upon our Jewish comrades' to

[138] Kelemen, 'Ibid', and idem, 'In the Name of Socialism', pp. 349-50.
[139] Gorni, *British Labour Movement and Zionism*, p. 155.
[140] Reginald Reynolds, 'Palestine and Socialist Policy', *Spain and the World*, 29 June 1938 republished in *British Imperialism and the Palestine Crisis, Selections of the Anarchist Journal Freedom: 1938-1948* (London, 1989), p. 21.
[141] Reynolds, 'The Situation in Palestine', *Spain and the World*, 18 March 1938 in *Ibid.*, p. 18.
[142] Ibid., 'Palestine and Socialist Policy', in *Ibid*, p. 23.
[143] Reynolds, 'Conspiracy on Palestine', *Spain and the World*, August 1941 in *Ibid.*, p. 50.
[144] Reginald Reynolds, *My Life and Crimes* (London, 1956), p. 165.

further its imperialist aims.[145] In early 1937, Gossip chaired a meeting of the British Section of the LAI which unequivocally backed Arab nationalist demands including the 'stoppage of Jewish immigration into Palestine'.[146] George Orwell, who was briefly an ILP member in the late 1930s, also remained unconvinced that 'unrestricted' Jewish immigration into Palestine was 'desirable'.[147]

As part of an exchange of views with leading Labour Zionists, Palestinian socialist and trade union leader George Mansur was given a platform in the *New Leader* to make the case against further large-scale Jewish immigration into Palestine. First, he pointed out that the Labour government in New Zealand had recently moved to restrict immigration and argued that Palestinian Arabs were entitled to 'the same self-determination in this matter'.[148] Secondly, Mansur invoked the notion of 'absorptive capacity'. Essentially, he claimed that the rate of Jewish immigration into Palestine since 1918 had exceeded Palestine's absorptive capacity, which had seen its Jewish population increase to 30% and moreover, 24% of those migrants were unemployed. Mansur argued that Britain and the USA were in a considerably better position to provide a solution to the refugee crisis because these nations were not only 'far wealthier' than Palestine but also had 'infinitely more underdeveloped land to exploit'.[149] As such, he proposed that Britain and the USA should lift its restrictions upon Jewish immigration and provide asylum for persecuted Jews. Finally, Mansur emphasised that he was not opposed to Jewish immigration *per se*, rather that Jewish immigration into Palestine to secure a livelihood was in accordance with socialist principles, whereas immigration with the aim of creating a Jewish-majority state ran contrary to the values of socialism.[150]

As we have noted in a previous chapter, after visiting Palestine in 1937, ILP MP John McGovern significantly shifted his view on Zionism as a result of his admiration for the activities of Labour Zionism.[151] Shortly afterwards, he visited Europe where he was

[145] Quoted in Stanley Harrison, *Alex Gossip* (London, 1962), p. 55.
[146] 'League Against Imperialism, Sixth Annual Conference 27th and 28th February 1937, Resolution on Palestine', p. 2. DBN 25/1.
[147] Giora Goodman, 'George Orwell and the Palestine Question', *The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms*, vol. 20 (2015), p. 325. Orwell joined the ILP in June 1938, remaining a member up until the outbreak of WWII, see Ian Bullock, *Under Siege: The Independent Labour Party in Interwar Britain*, (Edmonton, 2017), p. 292.
[148] George Mansur, 'Palestine: The Arab Socialist Case', *New Leader*, 18 November 1938.
[149] Ibid.
[150] Mansur, 'Arab Offer to Jews', *New Leader*, 20 January 1939.
[151] Gorni, *British Labour Movement and Zionism*, p. 156.

profoundly moved by the plight of Jewish communities under the Nazi regime.[152] In his memoirs, he recalled his experience in Vienna where he encountered a 'fiendishly cruel' anti-Semitic exhibition which was 'designed to instil hatred of the Jewish population'.[153] McGovern detailed how the exhibition claimed that Jews controlled 'all the banking houses of the world', and included imagery depicting Jews accompanied by the text 'Every Jew is a criminal'. He was angered by this 'unworthy attempt to whip up bitterness against a persecuted race of human beings'.[154] On his return, McGovern called on the British government to convene a conference of major nations with a view to imposing an economic boycott on Nazi Germany to force the regime to cease the 'vicious terror' inflicted on the Jewish population.[155]

These first-hand experiences in Europe further reinforced his pro-Zionist standpoint. As he told the House of Commons:

> I thank God as things have developed that Palestine has been in existence to rescue the large number of people who have been the victims of the pogroms and bloody brutality of the Hitler regime in Germany. If they are not to be permitted to enter Palestine where are they to go? Is the whole world so bankrupt in statesmanship that it cannot solve the simple problem of taking 500,000 people and putting them into areas, including Palestine, where they can be relieved from the tremendous agony and the blood-bath which is going on in Germany? [156]

Therefore, McGovern demanded 'unlimited' Jewish immigration into Palestine in order to 'rescue the refugees from Central Europe'.[157] But he was not in total harmony with the objectives of the Zionist movement, as he advocated settlement in various countries not solely Palestine and did not explicitly demand the creation of a Jewish-majority state.[158]

While the increasing persecution of Jews in Europe served to strengthen the pro-Zionist position of the Labour Party's mainstream as well as some ILPers such as McGovern, Brockway however, responded in a radically different manner. For Brockway, an anti-Zionist

[152] Ibid.
[153] John McGovern, *Neither Fear Nor Favour* (London, 1960), p. 120.
[154] Ibid.
[155] H.C. Deb., 29 June 1938, vol. 337, cols. 1875-6.
[156] Ibid., 24 November 1938, vol. 341, col. 2060.
[157] Ibid., col. 2067.
[158] Ibid.

stance was intrinsically linked to ensuring that Palestine could become an effective refuge for European Jewry. He argued that only by renouncing the demand of a Jewish-majority state could Arab fears vis-a-vis further Jewish immigration into Palestine be allayed.[159] Therefore, to enable Palestine to be a refuge for large numbers of Jewish refugees, an anti-Zionist stance was an essential precondition and had to be articulated even more urgently and forcefully. As he wrote in the *New Leader*, 'If the Jews could prove to the Arabs their desire to cooperate without any ulterior Nationalist or racial aims there would be room for millions of Jews within the vast expanses of the Arab Federation extending across the near east and northern Africa'.[160]

The rise of fascism in Europe framed the debate on Palestine in another significant respect. Several leading Labourites highlighted the apparent links between the Palestinian nationalist movement and Nazi Germany and fascist Italy in order to further discredit Palestinian Arab demands. Most notably, the general strike and revolt of 1936-9 was characterised as being instigated by European fascist powers.[161] Thus, any concessions made to Palestinian Arab demands for self-government or a reduction in Jewish immigration were framed as 'appeasement'.[162] Within the ILP, this rhetoric was deployed by McGovern who described the uprising as 'terrorism manufactured by the brutal bandits of Italy and Germany'.[163] Furthermore, McGovern sought to delegitimise Palestinian Arab nationalism by portraying the Mufti of Jerusalem as essentially a fascist in the mould of Hitler and Mussolini.[164] Thus, when Maxton highlighted claims of British atrocities against Palestinian Arab civilians during a parliamentary debate, McGovern dismissed these charges as the invention of 'a Nazi agent' operating in Britain.[165] The ILP's official policy took a more nuanced view. It claimed that some of the aristocratic Palestinian nationalist leaders had 'stimulated anti-Semitism, extolled Hitler' and 'adopted much of the mentality of Fascist Nationalism'.[166] Furthermore, in the *New Leader*, Brockway claimed that there was 'no doubt' that 'Arab terrorists' had

[159] Gorni, *British Labour Movement and Zionism*, p. 158.
[160] Brockway, 'Is it Too Late for Arab-Jewish Unity?', *New Leader*, 10 March 1939. Brockway also made this argument in his preface in Mordekhay Orenstein, *Palestine: A Plea for Jewish-Arab Unity* (London, 1939), pp. 6-7.
[161] Paul Kelemen, 'Looking the Other Way: The British Labour Party, Zionism and the Palestinians', in Christine Collette and Stephen Bird (eds.), *Jews, Labour and the Left: 1918-48* (London, 2000), p. 147.
[162] H.C. Deb., 24 November 1938, vol. 341, cols. 2044-6; H.C. Deb., 22 May 1939, vol. 347, col. 1993.
[163] H.C. Deb., 24 November 1938, vol. 341, col. 2067.
[164] Ibid., col. 2061.
[165] Ibid.., 28 June 1939, vol. 349, cols. 401-2.
[166] ILP, *Socialist Policy For Palestine*, p. 2.

'received assistance' from Mussolini.[167] However, at the same time, it acknowledged that there was also a genuine, politically-conscious nationalist movement which had legitimate grievances.[168] Through the *New Leader*, it called upon the Arab socialists to repudiate any anti-Semitic elements within the Arab nationalist movement.[169] Brockway argued that while these fascist ideas had to be opposed, the situation had been caused 'to a large extent by the 'indifference of the European working class movement' to the anti-colonial struggles.[170] Therefore, the appropriate response was for revolutionary socialists to redouble its anti-colonial activities to win the support of these movements and influence them towards socialism. This line of argument was reminiscent of Brockway's rationale for socialist engagement with anti-colonial movements via the LAI, namely that a failure to do so would mean that nationalists would gravitate toward communism.

Reynolds vehemently challenged this narrative. He contended that in fact, it was British rule in Palestine that was fundamentally fascist and analogous to Mussolini's actions in Abyssinia and to Hitler's regime.[171] Moreover, Reynolds repeatedly argued that while it was deeply misguided for any Arab nationalists to admire or look to European fascism for support, the fault for this development lay with British socialists' support for Zionism and their anti-democratic rejection of Palestinian Arab demands for self-determination.[172] In addition, he maintained that it was immaterial whether the Palestinian Arab leadership was reactionary or whether there was evidence of European fascist involvement, socialists nevertheless should unequivocally support the 'just demand' of self-determination.[173] Similarly, Mansur responded to this argument by making an analogy with German support for the Irish nationalist movement during the First World War, rhetorically asking whether this meant that Irish nationalist leaders such as Roger Casement were merely 'pawns in in the hands of German Imperialism'?[174]

[167] Fenner Brockway, 'Terror in Palestine', *New Leader,* 15 July 1938.
[168] ILP, *Socialist Policy For Palestine*, p. 2.
[169] Brockway, *New Leader*, 'Tragedy of Palestine', 21 October 1938.
[170] *A Lead to World Socialism: Report of Revolutionary Socialist Congress Brussels, October 31-November 2nd, 1936* (London, 1936), p. 30.
[171] Reynolds, 'The Situation in Palestine', *Spain and the World*, 18 March 1938, p. 16.
[172] Reynolds, 'Palestine and Socialist Policy', 29 June 1938, *Ibid*., p. 24 and 'Conspiracy on Palestine', *Ibid.*, p. 52.
[173] Reynolds, 'Palestine and Socialist Policy', 29 June 1938, *Ibid*., p. 24
[174] Mansur, 'Palestine: The Arab Socialist Case', *New Leader,* 18 November 1938.

Reynolds, Mannin and Mansur faced accusations of anti-Semitism during the course of their anti-Zionist activism. Mansur faced claims after sharing a platform with British right-wing anti-Semites, a charge which Reynolds disputed.[175] Emma Goldman claimed that although Reynolds did not possess a 'particle of anti-Semitic feeling', an article he had written on Palestine had lent itself to 'the impression that he is a rabid anti-Semite'.[176] Reynolds strongly disputed this and emphasised that his comments had clearly distinguished between Zionists and Jews.[177] He also contended that he was 'pro-Jewish' and pointed out that he had supported Jewish refugees.[178] Referring to Zionism, he complained that 'because Hitler regarded all Jews as evil, anti-Fascists were prone to assume that no Jew could ever, in any circumstances, do any wrong'.[179] However, Reynolds appeared to attempt to obfuscate the issue of anti-Semitism when he responded to the charge by pointing out that 'Arabs are also Semites'.[180] Moreover, he contended that Zionism not Nazi propaganda was primarily responsible for fomenting anti-Semitism in the Arab world.[181]

Mannin also took a somewhat ambivalent view, arguing that there was a double standard at work whereby Hitler's anti-Semitism was being condemned but not British treatment of Arabs in Palestine and British actions in other areas of the empire.[182] Thus she wrote:

> If the fascist persecution of the Jews moves me less than it does many people, it is not because I am not horrified and disgusted by the preposterous racial persecution… not because as some may contend I am anti-Semitic… but because I do not forget that all the time… there is no less revolting Imperialist persecution of Arabs, Negros and Indians.[183]

As an ardent pacifist, for Mannin, the priority was to avoid the 'supreme evil' of another world war. Therefore, she wrote, 'I cannot believe that if I were Jewish, I should wish millions to perish that I and mine might be saved'. Consequently, Mannin appeared reluctant to highlight the issue of anti-Semitic persecution on the basis that there was a danger that it

[175] Kelemen, 'British Labour Party and Zionism', p. 86.
[176] Emma Goldman, 'Letter to the Editor', *Spain and the World*, 26 August 1938, republished in *British Imperialism and the Palestine Crisis,* pp. 24-5.
[177] Reynolds, 'Letter to the Editor', 16 September 1938, *Ibid*, p. 30.
[178] Reynolds, *My Life and Crimes*, p. 165
[179] Ibid.
[180] Reynolds, 'Conspiracy on Palestine', *Spain and the World*, August 1941, p. 50 and 53.
[181] See: Ibid., 'Palestine and Socialist Policy', *Spain and the World*, p. 20 and 'Conspiracy on Palestine', Ibid., p. 50.
[182] Ethel Mannin, *Privileged Spectator: A Sequel to Confessions and Impressions* (London, 1939), p. 268.
[183] Ibid., pp. 293-4.

'obscured' other important issues (such as the brutality of imperialism) and could involve Britain in war.[184] Moreover, she was criticised by fellow activists in the pacifist movement for making a reference to 'Jewish war-mongering'.[185]

Many anti-Zionists were evidently conscious that expressing opposition to Zionism could result in accusations of anti-Semitism. Therefore, they often sought to pre-empt any such claims by prefacing their critique of Zionism with an insistence that it was not motivated by anti-Semitism. Thus, Mansur was adamant that he had 'no quarrel with Jews as such' and would 'welcome as brothers any Jews who will throw themselves into the fight for the liberation of our country from British rule'.[186] Similarly, Gossip claimed that his anti-Zionist stance had the support of the 'great majority' of Jewish members of his trade union.[187] In a speech which argued for immediate independence for Palestine, Maxton referred to the Jewish members of his constituency as 'a friendly, decent section of our community' and emphasised that he was not disregarding their views, as he had not received any correspondence from them concerning Palestine.[188] When Reynolds organised an anti-Zionist motion censuring McGovern at the ILP's annual conference, he deliberately ensured that it was moved by an anti-Zionist Jewish delegate.[189]

The racial imagination was significant in the way that anti-Arab racism pervaded arguments in support of Zionism. The prevailing discourse routinely essentialised Arabs and, as Kelemen has noted, many leading Labourites subscribed to the historicist racist notion that development could only come from the outside.[190] The belief that Arabs were inherently inferior to Europeans in the hierarchy of civilization was widely held. Accordingly, by virtue of being European, Zionist Jews would bring 'civilisation' to Palestine. Thus, the conflict was repeatedly framed as one between the forces of Western modernity and progress, versus Eastern backwardness and reaction.[191] Contrasting the camel with the motor-car was a device which was repeatedly deployed by various figures to illustrate this apparent clash.[192] Another

[184] Ibid., p. 294.
[185] 'The PPU Discusses 'The Link', *Jewish Chronicle*, 25 August 1939.
[186] Mansur, 'Palestine: The Arab Socialist Case', *New Leader,* 18 November 1938.
[187] Harrison, *Alex Gossip*, p. 54.
[188] H.C. Deb., 23 May 1939, vol. 347, col. 2163.
[189] Reynolds, *My Life and Crimes,* p. 166.
[190] Kelemen, 'Looking the Other Way', p. 147.
[191] Kelemen, 'Labour Pioneers', p. 37. Kelemen, 'In the Name of Socialism', p. 339.
[192] MacDonald was the first to use this, see: *Socialist in Palestine*, p. 12. Nevinson told an audience at a Foreign Policy Association debate that 'the contest in Palestine was between the camel and the automobile', see:

motif was to frame the conflict as one between the twentieth century and the Middle Ages.[193] Brailsford even evoked H.G. Wells' novel *The Time Machine* to underscore this point.[194] MacDonald's writings on Palestine and the Middle East more generally, reveal that he subscribed to many archetypical Orientalist tropes.[195] Likewise, as David Feldman has noted, Wedgwood essentially saw Palestinian Arabs as 'decadent Orientals'.[196] Indeed, Wedgwood's racialised worldview caused him to draw a distinction between 'European' and 'Oriental' Jews, remarking: 'It is not the Oriental Jew who is bringing Western civilisation into Palestine'. According to Wedgwood, Jews in Russia were 'An Eastern race' whereas Zionist Jews in Palestine were 'the pioneers of Western civilisation'.[197] On some occasions, these ideas were expressed in overtly racist terms. Brailsford for instance, referred to Palestinian Arabs as 'degenerate semi-savages' and a 'backward, illiterate and very dirty people'.[198] Similarly, McGovern claimed that Zionism was 'sending the torch of progress into the East to inflame the minds of the Arab population… to rouse them from their filth'.[199]

Crucially, these ideas had important political implications. For example, Brailsford derided the idea that Palestinian Arabs possessed a 'political consciousness' comparable to that of 'European races' and consequently opposed proposals for the creation of self-governing institutions.[200] As far as he was concerned, the vast majority of Palestinians were 'much too ignorant and submissive to take any real part in government whether local or national'.[201] Furthermore, Brailsford's belief in the 'backwardness' of Palestinian Arabs explicitly informed his defence of Labour Zionism's racially exclusivist policies in Palestine.[202] However, Brockway and Maxton framed the beneficial effects of Jewish immigration into Palestine principally in terms of socialism and trade unionism rather than a higher

'Speakers Discuss Palestine Outlook', *Boston Globe*, 3 November 1929. Also see: Henry Nevinson, 'Arabs and Jews in Palestine', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 8, no. 2, January 1930, p. 233. Similarly, Brailsford wrote 'the camel hates the bustling motor-car', see: 'Can the Jews and Arabs Live Together?', *New Leader*, 2 January 1931.

[193] For example, MacDonald, *Socialist in Palestine*, p. 13 and Brailsford, 'Our Duty to Palestine', *New Leader*, 30 August 1929.

[194] Brailsford, 'Can the Jews and Arabs Live Together?', *New Leader*, 2 January 1931.

[195] Kelemen, 'Looking the Other Way', pp. 143-144. See also for example MacDonald's description of Constantinople in MacDonald, *Wanderings and Excursions* (London, 1925), pp. 147-152.

[196] David Feldman, 'Zionism and the British Labour Party' in Ethan B. Katz, Lisa Moses Leff and Maud S. Mandel (eds.), *Colonialism and the Jews* (Bloomington, 2017), p. 199.

[197] H.C. Deb, 14 June, vol. 1921, col. 308.

[198] Quoted in Kelemen, *The British Left and Zionism*, p. 14 and p. 41, footnote 90.

[199] H.C. Deb., 24 November 1938, vol. 341, col. 2060.

[200] Kelemen, *The British Left and Zionism*, p. 18.

[201] Brailsford 'The Future of Zionism', *New Leader*, 4 April 1930.

[202] Ibid., p. 41.

'civilisation' or 'race'. In their analysis, Jews and Arabs were regarded as 'belonging to the same race' i.e. 'Semitic'.[203]

Yet Orientalism was not the preserve of those who sympathised with Zionism. In her novel *Comrade O Comrade,* which satirised the left of the 1930s, Mannin, who was an ardent supporter of Palestinian nationalism, introduced a character named Munir El-Yasin in a chapter entitled 'An Oriental Outing'. El-Yasin, who was presumably a representation of Mansur, was described as 'like all the Princes of Arabia rolled into one' who, in a comic scene, was depicted horse-riding after addressing a demonstration in Trafalgar Square.[204] Notwithstanding the fact that the tone of the novel was satirical and presented its Palestinian Arab character and the Palestinian nationalist case in a positive light, it nevertheless deployed Orientalist stereotypes.

Conclusion

During the interwar years, anti-Semitism was a pervasive force across the political spectrum. Zionism was frequently presented as another component of the 'Jewish conspiracy'. Accordingly, the right-wing press often saw Labour's pro-Zionist position as a product of 'Jewish power'. For instance, *The Morning Post* queried: 'Why do politicians of the Left embrace with so much enthusiasm the Zionist cause?... It is impossible not to ask what influence has induced the Labour party to throw over thus all the zeal for imperial economy and self determination (sic.)'.[205] The Labour-supporting *Catholic Herald* explained the party's 'betrayal of the Arabs' by claiming that 'in the quarrel between the Jews and the Arabs, the Zionists had MacDonald's ear, influenced by a clever Jewish secretary'.[206] This was a reference to Rosa Rosenberg, MacDonald's private secretary, despite there being no evidence to suggest that Rosenberg had been involved in pro-Zionist activism or in any way informed MacDonald's views on the issue.[207]

[203] ILP, *Socialist Policy For Palestine*, p. 2.
[204] Ethel Mannin, *Comrade O Comrade: Or Low Down on the Left* (London, 1944), pp. 136-46. Mannin and Reynolds befriended Mansur and hosted him at Mannin's home in London, see Reynolds, *My Life and Crimes*, p. 165.
[205] Quoted in Cesarani, 'Anti-Zionism in Britain', pp. 120-1.
[206] 'London Catholic Herald Launches Attack on Jewish People', *JTA*, 11 July 1929.
[207] For an outline of Rosa Rosenberg's political career, see 'Secrets of Premier Entrusted to Girl', *The Pittsburgh Press*, 27 July 1930.

Anti-Semitism was often present in the rhetoric of several prominent pro-Zionist advocates, largely informed by the anti-Semitic dimension of Hobson's influential 'anti-imperialist' arguments which had been formulated at the turn of the century. Similarly, anti-Zionism, although motivated primarily by an anti-colonial ideology, could on occasion also be infused with anti-Semitic notions which stemmed from supposedly 'anti-capitalist' and 'anti-imperialist' ideas which saw 'Jewish capitalism' as an especially malevolent force.

There was, however, unanimous revulsion at outbreaks of violent anti-Semitism in Europe. Moreover, this clearly did inform support for Zionism. Feldman has argued that support for Zionism 'did not stem from an appreciation of the necessity of Zionism for Jews', rather it was based on the notion that Zionists were 'European colonists' who brought a higher level of civilisation and its apparent socialism made it 'especially attractive'.[208] Yet, these arguments were not mutually exclusive. For example, as we have seen, Brailsford repeatedly emphasised the benefits of Zionism in 'civilizational' and socialist terms, but he also argued that Zionism was justified as a 'partial return for the many world-wide injustices' suffered by Jews and, after visiting Palestine, highlighted the contrast between Jewish experiences in Eastern Europe and the settlements in Palestine.[209] Wedgwood, who similarly deployed such arguments, framing Zionism as a uniquely benevolent form of colonialism, also explained his support for Zionism as a 'duty' of 'every supporter of human rights' because of the 'atrocious and discriminating manner' in which Jews in numerous countries were treated.[210] Zionism for Wedgwood, represented 'a chance to put an end' to this persecution.[211]

In the 1930s, the intensification of violent anti-Semitic persecution in Europe prompted a reassessment for some on the anti-Zionist left regarding the level of Jewish immigration into Palestine. In the case of McGovern, it proved to be a major factor in his conversion to a pro-Zionist stance. However, in many cases this did not result in a conversion to a pro-Zionist position, in fact, as we have seen in the case of Brockway it strengthened his anti-Zionist views, as anti-Zionism was posited as an essential prerequisite to allow Palestine to become a refuge on a necessary scale. Maxton too maintained his anti-Zionist stance while being a consistent advocate of Jewish migration into Palestine. But anti-Zionism was not monolithic.

[208] Feldman, 'Zionism and the British Labour Party', p. 206.
[209] Brailsford, 'Today in the Holy Land', *New Leader*, 26 December 1930.
[210] 'Colonel Wedgwood Visits Pittsburgh in Interest of United Palestine Appeal', *Jewish Criterion*, 29 January 1926.
[211] Josiah C. Wedgwood, 'The Beginning of Wisdom', *The Hebrew Standard of Australasia*, 20 June 1924.

For other left-wing anti-Zionists, such as Reynolds and Mannin, aiding Jewish refugees could not mean supporting significant Jewish migration into Palestine because it violated the principle of self-determination and facilitated colonisation.

The debates exposed the tension between support for the right of self-determination and support for the right of asylum. It revealed that even in such extreme circumstances, the right to migrate was not deemed absolute. For both Palestine and Britain, the potential impact upon the current population had to be considered. Post-disaffiliation, ILP leaders and activists were forced to almost continuously reassess their thinking on Palestine in response to the worsening plight of European Jewry.

Conclusions

For the socialist politicians, intellectuals, and activists of the ILP, it was axiomatic that they were internationalists. However, what this signified could substantially vary, despite the same terminology often being used. Moreover, internationalism was not just a theoretical notion, it was also practiced, and accordingly, significantly different interpretations of internationalism produced considerably different practices. Responses to Palestine were firmly rooted in these pre-existing understandings of what constituted internationalism and as such, involved questions of imperialism, colonisation, nationalism, and race. For instance, in the 1920s, according to MacDonald and Brailsford's interpretation of internationalism, Labour was duty-bound to implement the League of Nations mandate on behalf of the international community. By contrast, later, in the 1930s, for the interpretation adhered to by Maxton and Brockway as revolutionary socialists, internationalism when applied to Palestine meant advocating the end of the mandate on the basis that it was an instrument of imperialism and supporting the creation of independent working-class organisations in Palestine at a non-state, transnational level.[1]

It is evident that those ILP anti-colonialists who aligned with the LAI were cohesive in their arguments. These centred on three key issues, namely that empire was inherently exploitative to the subject peoples, that it impoverished British workers and was a threat to peace. Although some anti-colonialists may have sought to appropriate Hardie and Morel in order to lend legitimacy and continuity to the policy, this variant of anti-colonialism was a new direction. Moreover, the election in May 1929 of ILPers associated with the LAI such as Maxton, Brockway and other ILP MPs created an unprecedented situation whereby members of a party of government were simultaneously active in an organisation committed to ending the British Empire. That said, there was a certain limitation to their anti-colonialism. Brockway at least did not advocate immediate and unconditional independence for all nations. Furthermore, once Labour was in power, the response was inconsistent, as although outspoken on India, the anti-colonial argument was not as seriously pursed in the cases of Egypt or Palestine. Thus, although there was a rhetorical shift, Imlay overstates the degree to which the ILP in the mid to late 1920s can be

[1] 'Socialists and Palestine', *New Leader*, 30 October 1936.

considered anti-colonial given that its official policies and editorial line still subscribed to more paternalistic notions.[2]

The conduct of the ILP leadership in the years leading up to its disaffiliation with Labour and its subsequent trajectory has often been criticised in labour historiography. However, in terms of colonial matters, it should be recognised that the ILP argument that Labour's colonial policy, despite pretensions of being anti-imperialist was in fact one of continuity, is now supported by many scholars. Furthermore, the ILP leadership was perceptive enough to realise that anti-colonial nationalism was an emerging force, eventually proving irresistible, which the labour movement could not afford to ignore.

An analysis of figures within the interwar ILP allows us to trace discussions within the British left more broadly. It provides an insight into the perspectives of mainstream statesmen such as MacDonald and intellectuals such as Angell, as well as more radical activists like Brockway. Indeed, Brockway continued to be a prominent figure on the British left for many subsequent decades. A study of the interwar years provides a snapshot of the origins of his involvement in the anti-colonial movement and, at the same time, advances our understanding of British anticolonialism more broadly.[3] By exploring the ILP's interactions with communist-inspired networks, the thesis has also allowed us to gain insight into some of the key internationalist perspectives of the communist left.

During the interwar years, Palestine posed considerable difficulties for some of the labour movement's most committed internationalist thinkers. By his own admission, Brockway found Palestine the most difficult of all international questions.[4] We can see that throughout the interwar period, he frequently reassessed and shifted his position. Similarly, Brailsford grappled with the issue and revised his views in several key aspects. When it came to the case of Palestine, whichever form of internationalism was pursued, some found that the existing theoretical frameworks were inadequate, as arriving at a solution was fraught with complexities. For example, MacDonald, who adhered to the belief that socialist governments could and should administer mandated countries, found that in

[2] Imlay, *Practice of Socialist Internationalism*, pp. 235-6.
[3] For Brockway's account of his anti-colonial activism see Brockway, *The Colonial Revolution* (London, 1973).
[4] Fenner Brockway, *Inside the Left* (London, 1942), p. 291.

Palestine, the terms of the mandate were unlike Iraq or any other British mandate. Before coming to power, MacDonald had consistently espoused a conventional pro-Zionist position. However, once in government, the upsurge of Palestinian Arab nationalism forced him to pursue a more balanced policy. This approach was then met with a flurry of criticism including from the PMC, the LSI and many in his own party, compelling him to once again shift tack. Similarly, in the late 1930s, for Brockway, despite his strong sympathy for anti-colonial nationalist struggles against imperialism, the solution could not be a simple case of aligning himself with Palestinian Arab nationalist demands for immediate independence as he did in India and other colonies. This was because in his view, such a development would likely result in preventing Palestine from providing refuge for Jewish workers persecuted in Europe and, a substantial number of Jews in Palestine were socialists rather than exploitative colonisers.[5] Instead, the focus was to unite Jewish and Arab workers in a joint struggle against imperialism and the nationalist elements within their own community.

Even where socialists agreed upon a broad framework, it did not follow that there was agreement regarding the specifics of policy. MacDonald, Brailsford and Snell all shared the view that the self-described 'anti-imperialist' dimension of their internationalism demanded administering Palestine as a mandate, ultimately with a view to granting self-government. Yet when Labour was in power in 1929-1931, disagreements emerged over the optimal way to pursue this in terms of concrete policy. MacDonald approved of the introduction of some measure of self-government in the form of a legislative council, whereas Brailsford rejected this move on the basis that the majority of Palestinian Arabs remained incapable of participating in such a system and that self-government at that juncture would jeopardise the creation of a Jewish national home.[6] His preference was for the British government to provide more active support for the creation of a Jewish national home, which would in turn hasten the time when the self-government could be 'safely' permitted and thus the mandate could eventually be terminated.[7] Snell also believed that the introduction of self-government in the form of a legislative council was premature and instead there had to be intermediate steps. This revealed that although there was agreement that the mandate could not be held indefinitely and that preparing Palestine for self-

[5] Brockway, 'Socialist View of Palestine', *New Leader*, 25 November 1938.
[6] H.N Brailsford 'The Future of Zionism', *New Leader*, 4 April 1930.
[7] Ibid.

government was an internationalist obligation, there was no consensus about precisely at what stage and in what form self-government should be developed. The examples of Snell and Brailsford also show us that at this time, it was within mainstream socialist internationalist thinking to advocate population transfer.

The competing claims in Palestine forced Labourites who were steeped in a tradition of liberal internationalism to debate central tenets of their ideology. Self-determination was one such concept. MPs such as Bennett and Cocks insisted on the paramountcy of the Palestinian Arab claim, essentially predicated on the fact that they constituted the majority of the population. But for others such as MacDonald, Brailsford, Angell and Buxton, the right to self-determination could not be justified solely in majoritarian terms. Instead, it was contingent upon several factors, such as the capacity to utilise the land productively, whether the majority of the population were 'capable' of exercising self-determination and whether it prevented an international problem from being solved.[8] Brailsford summed up this view when he wrote 'if we believe in any system of rights at all, an organized humanity must preserve to itself the power to override the particular race or tribe in the interest of the great society of mankind'.[9] Therefore, for these reasons, Zionism was often given precedence over the Palestinian Arab claim. Furthermore, Wedgwood and Angell argued that Zionism was a fulfilment of internationalism because Jewish self-determination via Zionism was a necessary precondition for Jews to develop an internationalist consciousness.[10] For socialists such as Reynolds, the right to self-determination was absolutely paramount, as he stated:

> For my part I will say that if the cause of self-determination is not a just cause, then the word justice no longer has any meaning for me and can be left out of the discussion. I only know that self-determination is *the basic principle of socialism*… and that I will fight every system of society in which this principle is not fundamental.[11] [My emphasis].

Analogies were deployed to demonstrate the coherence of socialists supporting Zionism as a nationalist struggle for self-determination. But the existence of two competing nationalist

[8] For Brailsford see: 'Three Opinions about the Zionist Movement', *Jewish Criterion*, 16 January 1931.
[9] 'Says Limit Jewish Palestine Influx to Half of Population, to Calm Arab Fears of Encroachment', *JTA*, 29 December 1929.
[10] 'Col Wedgwood's Work for Zionism', *Manchester Guardian*, 28 September 1922.
[11] Reginald Reynolds, 'Letter to The Editor', *Spain and the World*, 16 September 1938.

movements within the same territory meant that the same analogy could be used to validate diametrically opposing stances. Thus, Wedgwood and Scurr saw a continuity in Labour's support for Zionism and its previous support for Irish self-determination, whereas for Ethel Mannin, the obvious parallel was between Irish nationalism and Palestinian Arab nationalism.[12] Explaining his support for Labour Zionism, Wedgwood remarked 'We [the Labour Party] first fought for freedom of the Irish and now we fight for freedom of the Jews'.[13] The central character in Mannin's satirical novel *Comrade O Comrade* remarked: 'The Arabs… wanted their own country for their own people; they wanted to be free. If you were an Irishman that was something you could understand'.[14]

Another contested question was Zionism's relationship to colonialism. Again, analogies were frequently used, but in this case, they were often deployed to illustrate the exceptionalism of Zionism. Brailsford argued that Zionism had to be distinguished from other forms of colonisation because of its use of exclusively Jewish labour, which he claimed prevented Zionist colonisation becoming 'a colony of the African type' in which 'white overseers direct native labour'.[15] For Wedgwood, while Zionism was undoubtedly colonisation, it could not be compared with previous forms. Instead, it was historically unique. As he explained:

> In America, Australia, Africa, particularly South Africa, and even in Ireland our colonisation has been at the expense of the people who occupied the country that we were colonising… but this [Zionism] is the first case in which we have colonised without injuring the native population.[16]

Brockway also concluded that Zionism could not be equated with conventional colonialism as it differed in from that practiced by white colonialists in 'India and the tropics' in important respects.[17] Yet for Reynolds, there could be no question that Zionism was typical colonisation.[18] Furthermore, this anti-colonial stance was the fundamental basis of his

[12] 'British Labor Movement Backs Zionist Endeavours, Party Leaders Declare', *JTA*, 17 July 1928.
[13] 'Col. Wedgwood Addresses Reception Honouring Palestine Workers' Delegation', *JTA*, 17 January 1926.
[14] Ethel Mannin, *Comrade O Comrade: Or Low Down on the Left* (London, 1944), p. 140.
[15] H. N. Brailsford, 'Can Jews and Arabs Live Together?', *New Leader*, 2 January 1931.
[16] H.C. Deb., 22 May 1939, vol. 347, col. 1995.
[17] Fenner Brockway, 'Socialist View of Palestine', *New Leader*, 25 November 1938.
[18] See Reginald Reynolds, 'The Pawns in Palestine', *Spain and the World*, 3 June 1939 and Reynolds 'Conspiracy on Palestine', *Spain and the World*, August 1941.

opposition to Jewish immigration into Palestine, as he was equally opposed to Jewish immigration into any other colony such as Madagascar.[19] Here, Reynolds differed from Maxton and Brockway who as we have seen, were prepared to advocate the use of British dominions and colonies (including Palestine) to provide refuge.[20]

The presence or absence of anti-Semitic views was not a reliable indicator regarding an individual's position on Zionism. There was no correlation between those having positive attitudes towards Jews and holding pro-Zionist views; in fact, many leading Labourite pro-Zionists espoused anti-Semitic tropes. Anti-Zionist views were also occasionally imbued with anti-Semitic phraseology. But for most left-wing anti-Zionists, anti-colonialism rather than anti-Semitism was the key factor in accounting for opposition to Zionism. When we consider the examples of Maxton, Reynolds and Gossip, their rejection of Zionism was rooted in an anti-colonial worldview. As we have seen, with the debate that took place at the British Commonwealth conference in 1925, when there was criticism of Zionism, it was often because it was perceived to contradict internationalist principles. Even Wedgwood, who as a we have seen, was a committed champion of Zionism, came into conflict with Labour Zionists over their preference for a voting system for municipal elections in Palestine which Wedgwood argued contravened the values of socialist internationalism.[21]

Anti-Semitism was also relevant insofar as it related to a broader internationalist worldview which demanded support for persecuted minorities. Brailsford and Wedgwood argued that there was a moral imperative to support Zionism in order to provide a refuge to Jews persecuted by pogroms. But the same impulse could result in a very different conclusion. In the late 1930s, Brockway argued that an anti-Zionist stance was essential to allow the maximum amount of Jewish immigration into Palestine and its surrounding areas, and therefore provide refuge for Jews persecuted under fascism in Europe.[22]

A racialised worldview was significant in explaining a preference for Zionism over Palestinian Arab nationalism. In this view, Jews by virtue of being European, were

[19] 'Reg Reynolds Replies', *Ibid*., 16 September 1938, p. 28
[20] Gorni, *British Labour Movement and Zionism*, p. 159.
[21] Ibid., pp. 40-41.
[22] Fenner Brockway, 'Is it Too Late Now for Jewish-Arab Unity?' *New Leader*, 10 March 1939; Brockway, 'When Jews and Arabs Unite', *New Leader*, 4 August 1939.

perceived to be a 'civilising force', able to develop and modernise Palestine in ways that Palestinian Arabs could not. Furthermore, there was a tendency to essentialise and homogenise all Arabs and refuse to recognise distinctive national identities. This strengthened the Zionist claim because it was argued that whereas the Jews only had Palestine in which to settle, Palestine amounted to only a small fraction of Arab territory.[23] Moreover, this mindset led some to advocate population transfer of Palestinian Arabs into neighbouring Arab territories as a viable solution to the conflict.

Responses to Palestine were often characterised by an inconsistency. For example, when the Labour government proposed to revive a legislative council, Brailsford denied that Palestinians were capable of self-government, despite it being an 'A' mandate. This was at odds with his view that the populations of Iraq and Egypt were capable of self-rule, and indeed contrary to his own previous claim that regarding Palestine, 'England can no longer adopt the old-time imperialist policy of ruthlessness and ride rough-shod over a relatively advanced group of people, such as for example, the Arabs'.[24]

This view was indicative of a significant trend, as while nationalist movements in India, Iraq and Egypt elicited sympathetic responses from ILPers throughout the period, Palestinian Arab nationalism was frequently omitted from the discussion. Despite the anti-colonial turn signified by their involvement in the LAI in 1927, Maxton and Brockway did not view the events of August 1929 as a legitimate anti-colonial nationalist uprising. This suggests that although they sympathised with anti-colonial aspirations, their pacifist ideology meant that they were unwilling to support political violence. Furthermore, in the ILP's revolutionary socialist phase, the party leadership gave only qualified support to the nationalist uprising in Palestine which took place from 1936-9 as this time, sympathy for anti-colonial nationalist came into conflict with humanitarian concerns for Jewish refugees. This tension is but one of the many examples in which nationalism, and internationalism shaped the ILP's ambivalent position vis-à-vis Palestine. The study provides an insight into the key concepts which intellectuals and activists across the spectrum of the British left were forced to grapple with as they sought to comprehend, and propose solutions to, the often-tumultuous situation in Palestine.

[23] 'Says Limit Jewish Palestine Influx to Half of Population, to Calm Arab Fears of Encroachment', *JTA*, 29 December 1929.
[24] Charles H. Joseph, 'Editorial: Brailsford on Palestine', *The Jewish Criterion*, 13 December 1929.

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