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ANARCHISTS DEBATE PALESTINE



Internationalist,
Reginald Reynolds, Emma Goldman,
War Commentary

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National Atavism, by Internationalist (1906)

*From the premier issue of the anarchist periodical 'Mother Earth', March 1906,
New York City, published by Emma Goldman*

The Jewish circles in New York, Boston, Philadelphia and other cities in America are aroused over the visit of a spectre called Nationalism, alias Territorialism. Like all spectres, it is doing a lot of mischief and causing much confusion in the heads of the Jewish population.

The spirit of our ancestor, Abraham, has come to life again. Like Abraham, when Jehovah commanded him to go in quest of the promised land, the Jewish Nationalists make themselves and others believe that they long for the moment, when with wife and child and all possessions, they will migrate to that spot on earth, which will represent the Jewish state, where Jewish traits will have a chance to develop in idyllic peace.

Natural science calls retrogression of species, which shows signs of a former state already overcome, atavism. The same term may be applied to the advanced section of the Jewish population, which has listened to the call of the Nationalists. They have retrogressed from a universal view of things to a philosophy fenced in by boundary lines; from the glorious conception that "the world is my country" to the conception of exclusiveness. They have abridged their wide vision and have made it narrow and superficial.

The Zionism of Max Nordau and his followers never was more than a sentimental sport for the well-to-do in the ranks of the Jews. The latter-day Nationalists, however, are bent on reaching those circles of the Jewish race that have so far followed the banner of Internationalism and Revolution; and this at a moment when revolutionists of all nationalities and races are most in need of unity and solidarity. Nothing could be more injurious to the Russian revolution, nothing prove a lack of confidence in its success, so much as the present nationalistic agitation.

The most encouraging and glorious feature of revolutions is that they purify the atmosphere from the thick, poisonous vapors of prejudices and superstition.

From time immemorial revolutions have been the only hope and refuge of all the oppressed from national and social yokes. The radical nationalistic elements seem to have forgotten that all their enthusiasm, their faith and hope in the power of a great social change, now falters before the question: Will it give us our own territory where we can surround ourselves with walls and watch-towers? Yes, the very people, who once spoke with a divine fire of the beauty of the solidarity of all individuals and all peoples, now indulge in the shallow phrases that the Jew is powerless, that he is nowhere at home, and that he owns no place on earth, where he can do justice to his nature, and that he must first obtain national rights, like all nations, ere he can go further.

These lamentations contain more fiction than truth, more sentimentality than logic.

The Poles have their own territory; still this fact does not hinder Russia from brutalizing Poland or from flogging and killing her children; neither does it hinder the Prussian government from maltreating her Polish subjects and forcibly obliterating the Polish language. And of what avail is native territory to the small nations of the Balkans, with Russian; Turkish and Austrian influences keeping them in a helpless and dependent condition. Various raids and expeditions by the powerful neighboring states forced on them, have proven

tragedy and that, should my own worst fears be realised, few in England will stop to think how near our own doorstep lies the prime responsibility. So far from having erred by 'conciliating' the Arabs. I hold that the double crime of British imperialism in Palestine has been the repression of the Arabs and fostering among the Jews unrealisable hopes which have lured them steadily to their own destruction."

This article will be denounced by many as "anti-Semitic." As I have already pointed out, an Arab is also a Semite. My position, in fact, is (oddly enough) that I am opposed to the oppression of anybody by anybody else. And my attitude to Jews, Arabs and every other nation is determined by what those particular Arabs, Jews, Germans or Englishmen happen to be doing. Sympathy with Indians and indignation on account of their sufferings does not make me a lover of Indian princes — quite the reverse. And that man is a sentimental nuisance who lets his sympathy with persecuted Jews colour his attitude to the oppressive and suicidal policy of Zionism and the gigantic fraud which has so long successfully concealed the operations of British imperialism in Palestine.

Zionism, by War Commentary (1944)

From 'War Commentary, For Anarchism', Mid-April 1944, London, UK

Zionism has become reactionary because instead of being a scheme for immigration, as many at first thought it would be, it became a scheme for colonization, and therefore of imperialism. If there are now differences between imperialism and the more impatient nationalists, we may see it paralleled in South Africa in the struggle between Smuts and imperialism on the one hand and Malan and the Afrikaander Nazis on the other, who certainly cannot be termed "progressive" by their "friends at court".

We hear many voices in this country urging that the scheme for a totalitarian Zionist State in Palestine should be helped to succeed because it would assist the Jewish people to a homeland of their own. It is pointed out that in so vast a portion of the world they are persecuted and need a haven of refuge. With this we are not disposed to agree, for these plans are suggested for after the war, when presumably it is taken for granted that persecution and anti-semitism will continue. This may well be the case, but it is the duty of all to prevent this state of affairs by making the social revolution that will end persecution for all peoples, which is not only a more humane, but an easier, task, than rooting thousands and millions from their native homelands and settling them in a few miles of desert knowing full well of the dissension of those already there.

The greatness of the Jewish people never made itself manifest when it was an imperialism, a compact tribe of warriors inspired with the idea of a God personally responsible for fighting its battles against all the nations of the world, framing severe penal codes for itself and despising the rest of the world. Nor was it manifest in the years it was constricted to the ghetto and forced into trade and usury. Its greatness came with the Diaspora, in its spreading civilisation amongst the nations; most of all when the French Revolution broke down all barriers, and its apostles of freedom arose like Heine who were cosmopolitans and not narrow nationalists. Fortunately no Revisionist racial bar prevented Freud, Spinoza, Zamenhof, Mendelssohn, Einstein, Marx and others from merging their gifts among the nations.

Mandate, in direct opposition to those wishes.

“From the end of the last war the Arabs have been treated to a haphazard mixture of repression and promises, and the demand of Arab ‘reactionaries’ for democratic self-government in Palestine remains unfulfilled.

“On the other hand, the Jewish immigrants, forced upon the country and remaining there under the protection of British bayonets, can hardly complain of their treatment in general. They have successfully opposed even the most timid moves towards representative government and have established a minority interest which has been maintained in defiance of majority rights by such ‘democratic’ measures as internment of Arabs without trial and wholesale destruction of Arab houses (to mention only two indisputable facts regarding our stewardship.)

“We are told that the Arab leaders are feudal reactionaries. If that be so, then the same could be said of the authors of Magna Carta and of Simon de Montfort (who persecuted the Jews!) whilst Pym and Hampden can be regarded merely as representatives of a reactionary squirearchy. History, however, is right in regarding such men as instruments in a progressive process rather than as individuals with discreditable motives. One would have thought that in the present case, the cause of self-determination was of greater importance than the conjectures as to the motives of a few leaders.

“If the Arabs today are inclined to listen favourably to Hitler, who’s is the fault? Have they such pleasant experiences of British ‘democracy’ and of British ‘socialists’ (pro-Zionist almost to a man) or of the Jews themselves? Hitler, as the avowed enemy of democracy, Socialism, and the Jews, must inevitably have his attractions in a country where ‘democracy’, socialism and Zionism have been cloaks for imperialist policies. Not only in Palestine, but throughout the Arab world, there are Arabs who feel keenly on these questions. It is no doubt very foolish of them to hope for better things from Hitler, but at least it is understandable, and the blame is on us.

“Mary Arabs are turning to Hitler, just as those other ‘reactionary feudalists’ — the Abyssinians — turned to Britain for help against Italy, or as the Arabs themselves once sought a British alliance against Turkey.

“Unless unforeseen events upset my calculations, the Abyssinians are about to be ‘sold a pup’ by our government, and the Arabs will be cheated as badly by Hitler as they were on the previous occasion by Britain.

“But the fate of the Jews in Palestine is even more certain if Hitler breaks through into that part of the world; and whose fault will it be? Who but ourselves fostered and encouraged the Zionist policy, deliberately creating ‘a Jewish Ulster’, as it was called by Sir Ronald Storrs? Who but the Zionists themselves consistently opposed self-government and, by their policies, made friendly relations on a basis of equality impossible between Jew and Arab?

“I ask these questions deliberately in anticipation of events which may appall public opinion here — not to excuse or justify but to explain Arab resentment.

“Again and again the Palestine Jews have been warned that their insistence on their own minority interests as vastly more important than the rights of the Arab majority would lead to their isolation, to a bitter racial feud and to their ultimate extinction. These were not threats — men like Dr. Magnus (himself an eminent Jewish scholar) repeated such statements as sober warnings and solemn prophecies.

“I write today in the consciousness that nothing has been done to avert such a

what little protection their territorial independence has given them against brutal coercion. The independent existence of small peoples has ever served powerful states as a pretext for venomous attacks, pillage and attempts at annexation. Nothing is left them but to bow before the superior powers, or to be ever prepared for bitter wars that might, in a measure, temporarily loosen the tyrannical hold, but never end in a complete overthrow of the powerful enemy.

Switzerland is often cited as an example of a united nation which is able to maintain itself in peace and neutrality. It might be advisable to consider what circumstances have made this possible.

It is an indisputable fact that Switzerland acts as the executive agent of European powers, who consider her a foreign detective bureau which watches over, annoys and persecutes refugees and the dissatisfied elements.

Italian, Russian and German spies look upon Switzerland as a hunting ground, and the Swiss police are never so happy, as when they can render constable service to the governments of surrounding states. It is nothing unusual for the Swiss police to carry out the order of Germany or Italy to arrest political refugees and forcibly take them across the frontier, where they are given over into the hands of the German or Italian gendarmes. A very enticing national independence, is it not?

Is it possible that former revolutionists and enthusiastic fighters for freedom, who are now in the nationalistic field, should long for similar conditions? Those who refuse to be carried away by nationalistic phrases and who would rather follow the broad path of Internationalism, are accused of indifference to and lack of sympathy with the sufferings of the Jewish race. Rather it is far more likely that those who stand for the establishment of a Jewish nation show a serious lack of judgment.

Especially the radicals among the Nationalists seem to be altogether lost in the thicket of phrases. They are ashamed of the label “nationalist” because it stands for so much retrogression for so many memories of hatred, of savage wars and wild persecutions, that it is difficult for one who claims to be advanced and modern to adorn himself with the name. And who does not wish to appear advanced and modern? Therefore the name of Nationalist is rejected, and the name of territorialist taken instead, as if that were not the same thing. True, the territorialists will have nothing to do with an organized Jewish state; they aim for a free commune. But, if it is certain that small states are subordinated to great powers and merely endured by them, it is still more certain that free communes within powerful states, built on coercion and land robbery, have even less chance for a free existence. Such cuckoos’ eggs the ruling powers will not have in their nests. A community, in which exploitation and slavery do not reign, would have the same effect on these powers, as a red rag to a bull. It would stand an everlasting reproach, a nagging accusation, which would have to be destroyed as quickly as possible. Or is the national glory of the Jews to begin after the social revolution?

If we are to throw into the dust heap our hope that humanity will some day reach a height from which difference of nationality and ancestry will appear but an insignificant speck on earth, well and good! Then let us be patriots and continue to nurse national characteristics; but we ought, at least, not to clothe ourselves in the mantle of Faust, in our pretentious sweep through space. We ought at least declare openly that the life of all peoples is never to be anything else but an outrageous mixture of stupid patriotism, national vanities; everlasting

antagonism, and a ravenous greed for wealth and supremacy.

Might it not be advisable to consider how the idea of a national unity of the Jews can live in the face of the deep social abysses that exist between the various ranks within the Jewish race?

It is not at all a mere accident that the Bund, the strongest organization of the Jewish proletariat, will have nothing to do with the nationalistic agitation. The social and economic motives for concerted action or separation are of far more vital influence than the national.

The feeling of solidarity of the working-people is bound to prove stronger than the nationalistic glue. As to the remainder of the adherents of the nationalistic movement, they are recruited from the ranks of the middle Jewish class.

The Jewish banker, for instance, feels much more drawn to the Christian or Mohammedan banker than to his Jewish factory worker, or tenement house dweller. Equally so will the Jewish workingman, conscious of the revolutionizing effect of the daily struggle between labor and money power, find his brother in a fellow worker, and not in a Jewish banker.

True, the Jewish worker suffers twofold: he is exploited, oppressed and robbed as one of suffering humanity, and despised, hated, trampled upon, because he is a Jew; but he would look in vain toward the wealthy Jews for his friends and saviors. The latter have just as great an interest in the maintenance of a system that stands for wage slavery, social subordination, and the economic dependence of the great mass of mankind, as the Christian employer and owner of wealth.

The Jewish population of the East side has little in common with the dweller of a Fifth Avenue mansion. He has much more in common with the workingmen of other nationalities of the country — he has sorrows, struggles, indignation and longings for freedom in common with them. His hope is the social reconstruction of society and not nationalistic scene shifting. His conditions can be ameliorated only through a union with his fellow sufferers, through human brotherhood, and not by means of separation and barriers. In his struggles against humiliating demands, inhuman treatment, economic pressure, he can depend on help from his non-Jewish comrades, and not on the assistance of Jewish manufacturers and speculators. How then can he be expected to cooperate with them in the building of a Jewish commonwealth?

Certain it is that the battle which is to bring liberty, peace and well-being to humanity is of a mental, social, economic nature and not of a nationalistic one. The former brightens and widens the horizon, the latter stupefies the reasoning faculties, cripples and stifles the emotions, and sows hatred and strife instead of love and tenderness in the human soul. All that is big and beautiful in the world has been created by thinkers and artists, whose vision was far beyond the Liliputian sphere of Nationalism. Only that which contains the life's pulse of mankind expands and liberates. That is why every attempt to establish a national art, a patriotic literature, a life's philosophy with the seal of the government attached thereto is bound to fall flat and to be insignificant.

It were well and wholesome if all works dealing with national glory and victory, with national courage and patriotic songs could be used for bonfires. In their place we could have the poems of Shelley and Whitman, essays of Emerson or Thoreau, the Book of the Bees, by Maeterlink, the music of Wagner, Beethoven and Tschaikovsky, the wonderful art of Eleanore Duse.

I can deeply sympathize with the dread of massacres and persecutions of the Jewish people; and I consider it just and fair that they should strain every effort to

internments without trial, collective fines, the wholesale destruction of houses, martial law and the rest of the reign of terror which has been necessary to curb Arab resentment and make possible the policies of British imperialists and their Zionist allies. But when a distinguished pacifist can write in this way we have conclusive proof of the successful way in which the whole problem has been blanketed.

A final instance must conclude this very brief study of the way in which the facts about Palestine are distorted or suppressed. Years ago I used to say that it was hard to get adequate publicity for the social conditions of our own country, harder still if one linked these facts with any form of socialist criticism, and all but impossible — in most vehicles of news and opinion — if one discussed British imperialism in India or the colonies. The pre-war years offered, in this respect, a marked contrast between the readiness of the press to lap up propaganda directed against German or Italian fascism and the decreasing attention to the worst evils of fascism when they appeared in some part of the British Empire. But at that time I discovered a singular fact — that, hard as it was to obtain a hearing for the wrongs suffered by Indians or Negroes, the hardest thing of all was to obtain the slightest attention to those suffered by the Palestine Arabs. The boycott was almost complete.

I therefore conclude with a copy of a letter which I sent to the New Statesman on May 4th of the present year. The Statesman is generally ready to publish views, even on the British Empire and the war, with which it is in disagreement. That this letter remained unpublished, whilst Zionist letters appeared and remained unanswered may be taken as a typical example of how even the more "left" papers are involved in this conspiracy on Palestine.

I give the text of the letter in full because, apart from the fact that it shows just what was suppressed, the case as I have outlined it here is still urgently relevant to the present situation. It is probably too late now to hope that the catastrophe foreseen by many of us long before the war will be averted, but it is not too late, nor yet too early, to work for a new attitude towards the whole problem of imperialism, of which Palestine is such an outstanding example. The betrayals of the past the deceit and camouflage of the present, should accustom us to expect more deceit and fresh betrayals, to anticipate no more from the flimsy "war aims" of today than we reaped from the perjured promises of yesterday. We must be ready, whatever the upshot of this war, for more fine phrases, as reassuring as those of the late President Wilson — and refusing to be reassured in the least, we must prepare now for the real struggle which this war cannot settle and will only complicate further.

This rejected letter was intended, and is still intended, to throw a little light on at least one corner of tortured world, the history of which has been tragedy and the future of which will be nemesis. Unless we understand our responsibilities for the past we are never likely to face our responsibilities for the future.

My letter to the New Statesman read as follows:

"In your editorial of May 3rd you refer to the Foreign Office having conciliated 'the reactionaries — The Fifth Column among the Arab magnates of Palestine and Irak'.

"I do not understand this statement or the assertion that we have cold shouldered and neglected the Palestine Jews. Whatever may be said for or against Zionism, it was an immigration carried out without reference to the wishes of the people of the country, and, judging by the history of Palestine under the

but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development” (my own italics). The Fourteen Points” were not accepted without reservations by the Allied Powers; but these reservations were explicitly stated in a note from Mr. Lansing (then American Secretary of State) to the Minister for Foreign Affairs at Berne, on November 6th, 1918. Indeed, Mr. Lloyd George, in a speech on War Aims (January 5th, 1918) had already declared that “a territorial settlement must be secured, based on the right of self-determination or the consent of the governed.”

The Palestine “mandate” may therefore be said to have come into existence in defiance of solemn pledges and even in defiance of the Covenant of the League of Nations itself, according to which Palestine, as an “A” Mandate, should have received only such outside advice and assistance as the people required and asked for from a Mandatory Power of their own selection. Instead of this, the country has been governed as a colony, used as a military, air and naval base in time of war, and forcibly subjected to immigration on an unprecedented scale. A country about the size of Wales, without the inhabitants being consulted, has been forced to absorb some 400,000 immigrants, whose most powerful political organisations have bitterly opposed even the most timid moves towards self-government that would allow the Arab majority any real control of their own country and its resources.

Sympathy with the Jews, persecuted in so many other countries, has completely blinded “left” opinion to this iniquity and helped to wrap the blanket of deceit and falsehood even closer around the problem of Palestine. One would have thought that, in such countries as the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the states of South America and even in Britain, those who felt most strongly the hardships of the Jews would wish to share their own heritage rather than thrust the Jews upon a country which has never asked for them, creating a new problem to solve an old one, saving people from oppression to make them instruments for the oppression of others. But this is not the case.

As recently as May 1941 an article by Middleton Murry was reprinted in *The Adelphi* which reflects the widespread ignorance in pacifist circles regarding the implications of the Palestine Mandate and of Zionism in particular. Under the title “Meditation on Heine” the writer discusses the Jewish problem in a sympathetic manner to which one can take no exception until he mentions Palestine. The article, it is true, was originally written and published in 1934; but neither then nor now could Mr. Murry’s words show the slightest realisation of what has actually happened in the Much Promised Land. He speaks of “Jewish Palestine in which anti-Semitism finds its “counter-assertion,” which here “takes a noble, creative and regenerative form.”

There is no recognition that Zionism has stirred up more anti-Jewish feeling than all the propaganda of Julius Streicher — I will not say “anti-Semitism,” for the Arabs themselves are Semites! Mr. Murry finds in Zionism “the permanent conquest of a Mediterranean shore for the ‘European’ idea” — and cannot see that this “conquest” (permanent or otherwise) can hardly be welcomed by those who are of the conquered race.

And lest we should imagine that this is indeed a conquest purely of ideas, and not, as it is in fact, a forcible colonization of a foreign country, Middleton Murry even says, “I am heartily glad that this has been done beneath our aegis.”

Our aegis is surely a mild expression for imprisonments and executions,

put a stop to such atrocities as have been witnessed by the civilized world within a few years. But it must be borne in mind that it is the Russian government, the Russian reactionary party, including the Russian Church, and not the Russian people, that are responsible for the slaughter of the Jews.

Jewish, Socialists and Anarchists, however, who have joined the ranks of the Nationalists and who have forgotten to emphasize the fundamental distinction between the people of Russia and the reactionary forces of that country, who have fought and are still fighting so bravely for their freedom and for the liberation of all who are oppressed, deserve severe censure. They have thrown the responsibility of the massacres upon the Russian people and have even blamed the Revolutionists for them, whereas it is an undisputed fact that the agitation against the Jews has been inaugurated and paid for by the ruling clique, in the hope that the hatred and discontent of the Russian people would turn from them, the real criminals, to the Jews. It is said, “we have no rights in Russia, we are being robbed, hounded, killed, let the Russian people take care of themselves, we will turn our backs on them.”

Would it not show deeper insight into the condition of affairs if my Jewish brethren were to say, “Our people are being abused, insulted, ill-treated and killed by the hirelings of Russian despotism. Let us strengthen our union with the intellectuals, the peasants, the rebellious elements of the people for the overthrow of the abominable tyranny; and when we have accomplished that let us co-operate in the great work of building a social structure upon which neither the nation nor the race but Humanity can live and grow in beauty.”

Prejudices are never overcome by one who shows himself equally narrow and bigoted. To confront one brutal outbreak of national sentiment with the demand for another form of national sentiment means only to lay the foundation for a new persecution that is bound to come sooner or later. Were the retrogressive ideas of the Jewish Nationalists ever to materialize, the world would witness, after a few years, that one Jew is being persecuted by another.

In one respect the Jews are really a “chosen people.” Not chosen by the grace of God, nor by their national peculiarities, which with every people, as well as with the Jews, merely prove national narrowness. They are “chosen” by a necessity, which has relieved them of many prejudices, a necessity which has prevented the development of many of those stupidities which have caused other nations great efforts to overcome. Repeated persecution has put the stamp of sorrow on the Jews; they have grown big in their endurance, in their comprehension of human suffering, and in their sympathy with the struggles and longings of the human soul.

Driven from country to country, they avenged themselves by producing great thinkers, able theoreticians, heroic leaders of progress. All governments lament the fact that the Jewish people have contributed the bravest fighters to the armies for every liberating war of mankind. Owing to the lack of a country of their own, they developed, crystallized and idealized their cosmopolitan reasoning faculty. True, they have not their own empire, but many of them are working for the great moment when the earth will become the home for all, without distinction of ancestry or race. That is certainly a greater, nobler and sounder ideal to strive for than a petty nationality. It is this ideal that is daily attracting larger numbers of Jews, as well as Gentiles; and all attempts to hinder the realization thereof, like the present nationalistic movement, will be swept away by the storm that precedes the birth of the new era — mankind clasped in universal brotherhood.

Palestine and Socialist Policy, by Reginald Reynolds (1938)

From the anarchist periodical 'Spain and the World', July 29, 1938, London, UK

[Reynolds self-identified as a socialist fellow traveller of anarchists, wrote regularly for the anarchist press and was the husband of the anarchist writer Ethel Mannin -Ed. 2026]

On June 19th, 1936, a debate took place in the House of Commons. The subject was Palestine, and Mr. Lloyd George explained the origin of the Mandate in the following words. He was referring to the Balfour Declaration:

“We came to the conclusion, from information received . . . that it was vital we should have the sympathies of the Jewish community . . . They were helpful in America and in Russia, which at that moment was just walking out and leaving us alone.”

In plain words, a pact was formed during the War between British imperialism and Jewish nationalism, of which the Arabs were to be the victims. Mr. Lloyd George denied this in his speech by vague references to the fact that our troops were at that time “fighting for Arab emancipation against the Turk.”

How much sincerity is to be found in this statement may be judged best from the observation of Colonel Lawrence in his *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*: “Of course we are fighting for an Allied victory. . . . The Arabs would have, in the last resort, to be sacrificed for them.”

Sacrificed they were, Lawrence was probably sincere in his desire to see the Arabs freed from the Turk; but in 1919 those who alone knew why the War had been fought were to express their true aims in the Peace. In the debate to which we have already referred, Mr. Amery, a former Colonial Secretary and First Lord of the Admiralty, explained these aims in relation to Palestine:

“In defence, Palestine occupies a strategic position of immense importance. It is the Clapham Junction of all the air routes between this country, Africa and Asia. It occupies an immensely important naval position in the new conditions in the Mediterranean.”

He then referred to the importance of Haifa in relation to oil supplies and the development of an alternative route to the Suez Canal. Others, including Commander Locker-Lampson, reinforced this argument. Their language must surely have shocked those who still believe that mandates are “sacred trusts of civilisation.”

Soon after the War, Jewish immigration into Palestine began. It was heavily backed by powerful capitalist interests, which obtained valuable concessions in the Dead Sea. Arab landlords sold land to the new-comers, but the Arabs as a whole had nothing to gain and everything to lose. A few peasants found a temporary market for their produce, while labourers found work in some of the Jewish enterprises, But in the nature of things they could not last.

“Buy Jewish goods and Employ Jewish Labour” became inevitably the slogans of Zionism. The Jewish workers and “socialists” of whom we hear so much, actually took the lead in this type of propaganda!

But whatever temporary prosperity may have come to any section of the Arab community, the net result of Zionism was plain. The country which had been their home for generations was to be handed over to a foreign race on the flimsy pretext that it had belonged to the Jews 2,000 years ago! (It would, indeed, be amazing to imagine what would happen to the world if this principle were

this transferred, and the post of Chief Justice was filled by the Attorney General, a man named Trusted, who was one of the defendants in this celebrated case and (as the Government’s legal advisor) had been chiefly responsible for the “evasiveness” which the judges had condemned. A final postscript might record the re-appearance of Sir Michael McDonnell, the ex-Chief Justice of Palestine, as Chairman of one of the London Appellate Tribunals for Conscientious Objectors.

It is not within my present scope to discuss why a man who was found too just for Palestine is not considered too just for his present position; but one may remark in passing that it is evidence of the Government’s Intention to avoid filling up its jails by a judicious sorting of objectors. Which shows that even the worst government may find a use for a just judge!

The real importance of this case is that it should be necessary to recall it at all. The reader may judge for himself that such sweeping criticism of a Government by the Chief Justice, in concurrence with a colleague, made in a High Court Judgment, should normally make the case a cause celebre and insure the widest possible publicity. Quite the most interesting thing about this case in that no such publicity followed it. To the best of my knowledge, not a single British newspaper even mentioned it.

The British administration in a British Mandate stood condemned by British judges, in a British Court, of deliberate falsehood and a cowardly attempt at deception, but the people of Britain — the great “democracy” on which there lay the final responsibility for the welfare of that “sacred trust of civilisation” — did not know and to this day still do not know that their officials were convicted of lying and cowardice, Still less do they know that those who found them out were punished and that the man principally responsible for the Government’s policy in this matter was rewarded with high office, so that the future Chief Justice might be less difficult to deal with.

This story aptly illustrates the blanket of concealment and deception which has characterised British administration in Palestine more than any other aspect of British Imperialism. It is in itself a story of attempted deception and it ends with a conspiracy of the entire British press to prevent that story even reaching the British public. It is, in fact, an epitome of our relations with the Arabs — first deceive the Arabs, or try to; then deceive the British public by hushing up the attempted deception of the Arabs.

The story begins with our promises to the Arabs during the last war. There has been endless argument about what those promises actually meant; and though having studied the correspondence — I consider the Arabs’ case to be indisputable, the alternative proposition, which is that our promises were ambiguous, is hardly to our credit. What is even more sinister, and beyond argument, is that the text of that correspondence was never published by the British Government in full until the Palestine Conference in London before the present war. Then at last, forced by crisis and imminent danger in the Near East, the Government yielded to the Arab demand that the full correspondence should be published, with official translations of Arabic texts. For over twenty years successive British Governments concealed that correspondence from British “democracy” and from the outside world, to the best of their ability.

What our government could not conceal, however, were the terms laid down in President Wilson’s “Fourteen Points.” Point 13 stated that “The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty,

Senior Puisne Judge, Mr. Justice Manning. Though concurring completely in their findings, the two judges prepared separate judgments on the case owing, as the Chief Justice remarked, to its “seriousness and importance.” Whilst giving the judgement against the Petitioner (for the Government had, apparently, a legal “right” to blow up every house in Palestine if it thought fit) the judges “marked their disapproval by doing so without costs” and some memorable observations were made on the administration and its methods.

The Chief Justice said: “The Petitioner, however, has done a public service in exposing what I am bound to call the singularly disingenuous lack of moral courage displayed by the Administration In the whole matter....”

“It would have been more creditable if the Government, instead of endeavouring to throw dust in people’s eyes by professing to be inspired by aesthetic or other quasi-philanthropic motives, such as those concerned with town planning or public health..... had said frankly and truthfully that it was primarily for defensive purposes.”

Mr. Justice Manning was even more explicit. Mr. Kantorovitch, the Junior Government Advocate, had appeared for the defendants and excused the deception, or attempted deception, of the people of Jaffa by explaining that they would have been “misled” if the truth had been told them. The comments of Mr. Justice Manning were caustic in the extreme: “We would have misled them by telling them the truth, so we thought it better to tell them a false hood” — such was his paraphrase of the case for the defence.

The proposed demolition was, in fact, only legal on the assumption that its ostensible excuse was a pack of lies; and Mr. Justice Manning summed up his reason for giving his judgment against the Petitioner in these words:

“I feel bound to accept the statement of the Government that the proposed demolition was always intended to be carried out under the provisions of the Order-in-Council and that this was concealed from the inhabitants of Jaffa because, not being lawyers, they might not have understood it. This is what Mr. Kantrovitch has said. In this particular instance I can conceive that the inhabitants affected might be bewildered by being told that the destruction of their house was necessary for the defence of Palestine, and that their houses could be blown up when there was power only to pull them down.”

After illustrating from the damage anticipated to neighbouring houses the difference between power to blow up and power to pull down, Mr. Justice Manning concluded with a reference to “a well-known work of fiction which described a Government Department known as the Circumlocution Office... Something similar seems to have found its way into Palestine, but its identity has been carefully concealed.”

Some 250 houses were destroyed in Jaffa, and other buildings were damaged by the explosions. No provision was made for housing those who were rendered homeless, and on this subject a scathing report was issued by the Government Welfare Officer (Miss Margaret Nixon). Whatever affect the High Court Judgment had in restoring confidence in British “justice” was negated by a policy of whole-sale demolitions throughout the country and other repressive measures, Even the two courageous judges were made to feel the weight of administrative censure for their outspoken comments.

The Chief Justice was offered the choice of an inferior appointment in a British colony or retirement on a pension — he chose the latter. His colleague, Mr Justice Manning, who might have been expected to succeed him, was soon after

universally applied. Modern America would be wiped out and England handed over to the Welsh.) For the Zionists there has never been any question of settling among the Arabs and living as equals. They have the intolerable arrogance of people who regard their own race as “superior” and the Arabs hate them for the same reason that the Negro hates the White Man.

Not all Hitler’s speeches have done more to create an anti-Jewish movement than this attitude of the Zionists. In Palestine, the Jews are not a persecuted minority, but the mainstay of British imperial policy. They know that their position is only tenable while the foreign ruler remains with his army of occupation. The Arab demands national independence and a democratic constitution, but this demand is consistently opposed by the Jewish organisations. They are the friends of dictatorship and foreign rule.

To crush the various attempts of the Arabs to revolt, savage measures of repression have been, and are being, used. Under emergency legislation, officially promulgated by the Government, it has been made possible to hang a man for the mere possession of fire-arms, after trial by a military court. It is hardly necessary to point out that such a charge is very easily concocted on perjured evidence. Of its application it may be observed that this measure has been rigorously applied to Arabs whilst Jewish offences have been overlooked or leniently dealt with. (Details are given with dates, etc., in Punitive Measures in Palestine, published by the Arab Centre, 72, Victoria Street, S.W.1). Damage to property is punishable by life imprisonment.

The Government holds power to commandeer any premises or articles it requires, and to demolish without compensation any houses where crimes are supposed to have been committed or abetted , “the actual offender being unknown.” In Jaffa alone, 600 Arab homes have been blown up under the regulation. “Collective fines ” are imposed on villages “the inhabitants of which THERE IS REASON TO BELIEVE have committed or connived at crimes or acts of lawlessness or violence.” Concentration camps, general searches without warrant, and censorship of posts, telegrams and publications complete the picture.

How this regime — in no respect better than Hitler’s — works out in practice, may be gathered from our newspapers to some small extent. Here we can find stories of Arabs shot at sight and on suspicion by gallant Englishmen. But the worst facts are not published, though the authority for them is at least as good as that offered for most fascist atrocity stories. A petition from the villagers of Al Tirah tells of what took place there on June 4th, 1936:

“The soldiers entered the houses, collected what they could of food, clothes and furniture and set it on fire . . . The owners, who watched helplessly, were beaten and struck down with the butts of rifles.”

In the end no arms were found, in spite of threats, and the soldiers left having destroyed everything but the money of the villagers, which they took with them. In another village (Al Taibah), 150 men were rounded up and forced to march round all day. Those who became tired were beaten and two who attempted to escape were shot down. One was bludgeoned with a rifle butt as he lay wounded, and both died in hospital. Many similar cases are known of brutality and murder.

Those who know anything about British imperialism will not be surprised at such facts. Imperialism is like fascism — a system of slavery, savage and ruthless when it is at bay. But while such measures have been used against the Arabs, in only one case has a Jew been executed up to the present time. With a few

exceptions they are either on the side of the Government or “plus royale que le roi.” The chief Jewish criticisms of the Government are to the effect that it has not gone FAR ENOUGH in its repressive measures!

Our sympathy with the Jews in Germany and many other countries must not blind us, therefore, for one moment, to the reactionary character of Zionism. What is appalling from every point of view is that the leaders of the working-class in Britain are whole-heartedly supporting the “mandate” with all that it implies. With characteristic hypocrisy, the Labour Party carried UNANIMOUSLY at its Conference in 1936 a resolution supporting the Palestine Mandate “in the interests of the peace of the world.” Their argument was that since “the situation of Palestine makes it a point of extreme strategic importance and, as such, an object for rival imperialist ambitions” it should remain under British control! But the existence of the Thieves’ Kitchen at Geneva enabled these “internationalists” to cloak the proposal in a suitable phraseology to disguise the crude imperialism of their own policy.

No-one, however, has waved the Union Jack with more enthusiasm than Mr. McGovern, who in defiance of the declared policy of his party (the I.L.P.) [Independent Labour Party] has continually insulted the Arabs and demanded even harsher methods of repression against them. When McGovern visited Palestine, the speech which he proposed to broadcast was so arrogant that even the Government, which is too wise to advertise its mailed fist unnecessarily, refused to let him speak. In this undelivered speech (published later in the New Leader, with an editorial disclaimer), McGovern produced his Zionist version of the White Man’s Burden, The Jew was “to bring civilisation to the poor Arab” and if the Arab didn’t like it, “the law” (i.e. British imperialism) was to operate “in a just but stern manner.”

Whether the people of the country liked it or not, said Mr. McGovern, “I say, send into Palestine unlimited numbers of Jews.” These Jews were to show the Arab “a higher and nobler life.” Most of this speech might be described as pure Melchett, but the final flourish, with its dictatorial “I say” was worthy of Mussolini in his proclamations against “disaffected” Abyssinians.

More recently, McGovern has treated us to another fascist outburst, this time in Parliament. In Hansard of June 14th, 1938, there is a report of a debate on the colonies, when McGovern, having first sneered at the Arabs for being poor and praised the Jews for being well-to-do, tells us that among the Jews young men and women go about in “shorts” to which fact he adds: “and the minds of the Arab women are being stirred.”

Now it is not clear as to what particular blessing of civilisation our Roman Catholic authority had in mind, but later on he says that “we ought to be sending the torch of progress into the East to inflame the minds of the Arab population in order to rouse them from their filth.” Whatever may be the advantage of Jews and Jewesses in shorts, I can hardly believe that an Arab who reads those words will feel inflamed with anything but a desire to give Mr. McGovern a kick in the pants.

McGovern’s speech ends with a plain declaration that he supports the Mandate and that he wishes the Colonial Secretary well — strange words for the representative of a party pledged against imperialism! And he hopes that when the present Government goes out of office he will be able to say to the Colonial Secretary: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

He does not explain how the Colonial Secretary can be the servant of anything

factors — especially the suitability or otherwise of the colony for Europeans’ settlement. Certainly it has nothing whatever to do with whether the colony is a “mandate” or not. But the “best” colonies have been shown up badly during the last year or two. The West Indies, for example, where the Governor (Sir Murchison Fletcher) got the sack for showing a little human sympathy — a rare and highly improper thing for a colonial official to show. He actually said that “an industry has no right to pay dividends at all unless it pays a fair wage to labour.”

Things got so bad in Trinidad that a Commission was sent out to discover why starving people revolted. This Commission discovered that 43% of the people were illiterate, that men earned from 2/6 to 2/9 per day on the plantations, and that the strike leader, Uriah Butler, was “a fanatical Negro who made speeches of an inflammatory character.” They censured a police inspector for hesitating to shoot innocent persons, recommended flogging for any man caught twice robbing an orchard, and criticised the Governor for showing some sympathy to empty bellies. Among the signatories of the report was Sir Arthur Pugh, a former T.U.C. [Trades Union Congress] President.

Conspiracy on Palestine, by Reginald Reynolds (1941)

From ‘War Commentary: For Anarchism’, August 1941, London, UK

In the year 1936 a singular case was heard in the Palestine High Court. An Arab, George Mikhail el-Qasir, sued the Attorney General of Palestine and the District Commissioner of Jaffa to prevent the demolition of his house in the Old City of Jaffa.

An official communiqué had been issued by the Government announcing the projected demolition of “certain existing buildings,” ostensibly for the purpose of “opening up and improving the Old City” This sudden interest in town-planning, occurring, as it did, during the Arab General Strike, and directed against the stronghold of Arab resistance, could not fail to be regarded in quite a different light by Arabs, who were cynical enough to see in it nothing but a punitive, or at the very least a military, measure, directed against themselves. Unsigned handbills from the Government Press confirmed this view by hints regarding resistance and threats of military force in the carrying out of the plan.

In the course of legal proceedings it became apparent from the evidence submitted on behalf of the Government officials that the proposed demolitions were, in fact, to be carried out by the military on instructions from the High Commissioner of Palestine. So far from being anything to do with town-planning, the destruction of these Arab houses had been ordered under an article of the Palestine (Defence) Order in Council of 1931, which said nothing about opening up or improving cities but allowed the High Commissioner to “cause any buildings to be pulled down and removed” (not blown up!) “if he thinks it necessary for the purpose of the defence of Palestine.” The Article referred to Regulations prescribing compensation, though, as the Chief Justice agreed, no such Regulations had in fact ever been made. In spite of this stipulation a notice served on the petitioner, requiring him to vacate his house, informed him that “No claim for compensation in respect of furniture or effects left in your house after that hour” (7 p.m., on June 28th) “will be considered.”

This case was heard before the Chief Justice, Sir Michael McDonnell and the

five “natives” to meet together except for religious purposes! And when the people, very naturally, formed “religious” societies to get over this difficulty a ruling was given which meant, in effect, that a meeting was not religious unless a white man was present.

We read of imprisonment in Germany and Italy, often without trial or after sentence by a secret tribunal. In India, under the Labour Government of 1929-31 some 60,000 persons were imprisoned within a period of about eight months for political “offences,” and of these many were condemned by secret tribunals whilst hundreds were not tried at all but imprisoned or put in concentration camps for an indefinite period with no charge brought against them. Many of these “detenues,” as they were called, were sent to the Andaman Isles — our Indian equivalent of the French “Devil’s Island” — an unhealthy spot where many died of disease.

The laws that restrict the liberty of the African Negro are unequalled in any part of the world. They vary in different parts of Africa, but everywhere they are to be found. In South Africa and certain East African colonies the following “passes” must be carried on occasion by every Negro:

Identification Pass.

Travelling Pass.

Six Days Special Pass.

Monthly Pass.

Daily Labourer’s Pass.

Day Special Pass.

Night Special Pass.

Trek Pass.

Location Visitor’s Pass.

Lodger’s Permit.

Poll Tax Receipt Pass.

Exemption Pass.

Unless he is carrying the appropriate passes, the native is liable to summary imprisonment. Forced labour is still common in many of the colonies. In Kenya the law prohibits the making to present any organisation being built approved by the Government — that is to prevent any organisation being built up (though secret organisations still continue in spite of all such legislation).

Hitler imposes a “collective fine” on the Jews. He learnt it from the British, who have used this method for years in India and are now using it in Palestine. When an Arab village is “collectively fined” the military and police impound all the livestock. Those who can afford to, buy back their beasts from the Government. Those who have no money lose them — that is to say, they lose their only source of livelihood, though they may be completely innocent of the “crime” for which they are being punished. Nobody knows or cares. But the children deprived of their food, are left to starve and the parents become beggars or bandits.

The case of Palestine is an up-to-date instance of imperialism and its logical consequences. We have seen that it is as bad as fascism, if not worse. Indeed, if there is any important difference between the two systems it is that the subject peoples seem to hate imperialism a great deal more than the people of the fascist countries hate fascism! Disarmed and helpless as they are in most of the colonies, they are continually agitating and striving to organise themselves against their foreign masters.

Some colonies are better, some worse. That depends on climate and other

but capitalism, or why he should wish to praise him for having served it. That, no doubt, would be too embarrassing, as it would involve explaining why Mr. McGovern is himself such a devoted servant of the system which his innocent constituents imagine he is destroying with floods of Parliamentary rhetoric. . . .

The problem of Palestine must be faced with courageous realism. The News Chronicle (July 8th, 1938) in its report on the Evian Conference on Refugees, reports that Colonel White, Australian Minister of Trade and Customs, who presided over one of the Committees, “stated that British stock had created the Commonwealth and people from the Home Country should preponderate while British settlers were forthcoming.”

No socialist or anarchist would, I hope, endorse that view, but there is no proposal that I know of to force Australia to reconsider its attitude by landing an army of occupation and compelling the people of Australia by force to accept an immigration policy to which they are opposed.

The people of Palestine have the same right to determine their own affairs, including matters of immigration, and to decide on policies that we — yes, even Mr. McGovern — think bad policies. It not be too late, even now, to bring the Arab and Jewish people together on the basis of an abandonment of Zionism by the Jews. If so, the first step will have been taken in a process which will drive out first the British imperialist and next the Arab feudal landlords and Jewish capitalists. But unless that step is taken SOON it will be too late, and the problem so far as the Jews are concerned, will be to resettle them in some part of the world where they can live at peace with their neighbours on the basis of a mutual agreement. This does not indicate either Madagascar or East Africa, where the native peoples have not been consulted and would have the same legitimate grievance as the Arabs.

What is most clear is that the acquiescence of so-called “socialists” in British imperialism can only drive the Arabs into the arms of German and Italian agents. They will see in fascism the enemy of the Jew and the socialist; in Germany and Italy they already see the enemies of England, What more is needed but a little more propaganda and financial support to convince the Arab people that the fascists are their best friends? And yet, if this happens, and the Arab world turns to Hitler and Mussolini in the false hope of salvation, the entire fault will lie with British Labour politicians who have shown that “democracy” to them is a cheap catch-word, to be used when it suits the interests of the British Empire, and laughed at the moment it is used in earnest.

All the talk about the Arab leaders being reactionaries or financed by foreign agents is so much balderdash, because those who use this sort of argument know that it is worthless and insincere. What does it matter who makes a demand or why it is made or who pays the bill if that demand is just? To reject a just demand is to brand ourselves as friends of tyranny and oppression: to accept it and to work for it is not only our duty but the only policy that will expose the pretensions of our enemies. If the Arab leaders are all that McGovern and his friends would have us believe, the best way to show them up is to accept their demands at face value.

Reginald Reynolds

Emma Goldman's Views on Palestine and Socialist Policy (1938)

From 'Spain and the World', August 26, 1938, London, UK

To the Editor,
"Spain and the World".
Dear Comrade,

I was interested in the article, 'Palestine and Socialist Policy', by our good friend Reginald Reynolds in 'Spain and the World' of July 29th. There is much in it with which I fully agree, but a great deal more which seems to me contradictory for a Socialist and a near-anarchist. Before I point out these inconsistencies, I wish to say that our friend's article lends itself to the impression that he is a rabid anti-Semite. In point of truth, I have been asked by several people how it happens that 'Spain and the World' printed such an anti-Semitic article. Their surprise was even greater that Reginald Reynolds should be guilty of such tendency. Knowing the writer I felt quite safe in assuring my Jewish friends that Reginald Reynolds has not a particle of anti-Semitic feeling in him, although it is quite true that his article unfortunately gives such an impression.

I have no quarrel with our good friend about his charges against the Zionists. In point of fact I have for many years opposed Zionism as the dream of capitalist Jewry the world over for a Jewish State with all its trimmings, such as Government, laws, police, militarism and the rest. In other words, a Jewish State machinery to protect the privileges of the few against the many.

Reginald Reynolds is wrong, however, when he makes it appear that the Zionists were the sole backers of Jewish emigration to Palestine. Perhaps he does not know that the Jewish masses in every country and especially in the United States of America have contributed vast amounts of money for the same purpose. They have given unstintingly out of their earnings in the hope that Palestine may prove to be an asylum for their brothers, cruelly persecuted in nearly every European country. The fact that there are many non-Zionist communes in Palestine goes to prove that the Jewish workers who have helped the persecuted and hounded Jews have done so not because they are Zionists, but for the reason I have already stated, that they might be left in peace in Palestine to take root and live their own lives.

Comrade Reynolds resents the contention of the Jews that Palestine had been their homeland two thousand years ago. He insists that this is of no importance as against the Arabs who have lived in Palestine for generations. I do not think either claim of great moment, unless one believes in the monopoly of land and the right of Governments in every country to keep out the newcomers.

Surely Reginald Reynolds knows that the Arab people have about as much to say who should or should not come into their country as the under-privileged of other lands. In point of fact our friend admits as much when he states that the Arab feudal lords had sold the land to the Jews without the knowledge of the Arab people. This is of course nothing new in our world. The capitalist class everywhere owns, controls and disposes of its wealth to suit itself. The masses, whether Arab, English or any other, have very little to say in the matter.

In claiming the right of the Arabs to keep out Jewish immigration from Palestine, our good friend is guilty of the same breach of Socialism as his comrade, John McGovern. To be sure the latter makes himself the champion of British Imperialism while Reginald Reynolds sponsors Arab capitalist rights.

Freedom in Every Country, by Emma Goldman (1939)

A letter from Emma Goldman to Mark Mratchny, January 30, 1939

Dear Mark, not believing in the efficacy of nationalism does not mean that we remain "objective and cool" about the plight of the Jewish people.

For myself I can say that I feel it very deeply; but I insist that it was the bounden duty of the Jews to fight for their rights and freedom and in every country where they were born and raised to help to create its culture and its civilization. I fail to see the benefit that it will get by establishing a new State in Palestine with the same old feelings of nationalism and a State. I see no great gain in the possibility of the Jewish masses being put in concentration camps or exploited by Jewish capitalists. That is the only difference between you and me, I suppose.

As to the Spanish libertarians, they were driven to the statement "our revolution is a Spanish revolution" only because they were forsaken by the international proletariat and betrayed by the democracies. Prior to that disgraceful and criminal treatment the Spanish libertarians have received from the rest of the world. There was never a talk of "our revolution is a Spanish revolution." On the contrary, they always maintained that the Spanish revolution and struggle against Fascism are not only to support Spain and Spanish rights but are for the people of the whole world.

Our Spanish comrades always insisted that if they succeeded in crushing Fascism in Spain it would undermine Fascism in the rest of the world. So you see, my dear, that it is not that our Spanish comrades have become nationalists instinctively so; but they are being driven at bay by friend and foe, not the least among them some of our own comrades. That has forced them to depend on their own selves and that has also created a nationalistic feeling, which I think is justified in their case.

Not so the Jews who have never lifted a finger to prevent the event of Hitler in Germany or have shown the least resistance in any country. Please do not think that I feel they are getting what they deserve — no. But I cannot close my eyes to the fact that the Jews have failed miserably to defend their own grounds. I insist further that if Hitler had only persecuted the Polish Jews he would have 90% of the German Jews on his side just as Mussolini had nearly all the Jews in Italy on his side.

Alas, it is no good to be a coward. In the end, no one respects cowards and the price for it is just as great.

The "Advantages" of British Imperialism, by Reginald Reynolds (1939)

From the anarchist periodical 'Revolt!: Incorporating Spain and the World', May 1, 1939, London, UK

Not only is our "democracy" as autocratic as a fascist state in its dealings with the vast majority of those subjected to its rule: it is also as brutal and as barbarous. Hitler and Mussolini have suppressed the freedom of the press. So does our Government in India and the colonies, the moment the press endangers British rule by telling unpleasant truths.

Freedom of Association is denied in the fascist countries. So it is also in many parts of the British Empire. In Kenya, for example, legislation forbids more than

opinion, and to ask whether Emma Goldman or anyone of her persuasion is prepared to advocate such a step? If I say that I am not going to interfere forcibly with my neighbour's household it does not necessarily mean that I approve of everything he does; and I am sorry if Emma cannot see the distinction.

My attitude to Palestine is based on the same principles. The prime question is not whether I approve of Jewish immigration, but who shall decide on its extent. At present, it is determined by a foreign government — our own — whose decisions are enforced upon an unwilling population at the point of the bayonet. The alternative of Madagascar would present the same problem (though Emma confuses it with the problem of Australia, as though both were self-governing and autonomous). Hence my suggestion that a little constructive thought should be devoted to discovering “some part of the world where they (the Jews) can live at peace with their neighbours by mutual agreement.” This is what my dear friend calls “denying these unfortunate people a chance of taking root in new countries.”

Emma's worst confusion is in her accusation of inconsistency because I support Arab independence and oppose Jewish nationalism. I support Moorish independence; but that does not mean that I should support the Moors in Spain, where they are the enemies of Spanish independence. I am not, as Emma appears to imagine, interested in nationalism for its own sake, but only where it is an expression of revolt against imperialism. And just as I am opposed to the Moors when they appear as conquerors in a fascist army, so I am opposed to the Jews when they appear as colonists in a British scheme to create an “Ulster” in Palestine. To follow this Irish analogy a little further, I am anti-Catholic; but in the Irish struggle for Catholic emancipation I should have been an emancipationist: not because I love the Pope, but because I do not believe in depriving a nation of its rights on account of its religion. Just so, in Palestine, I stand for the rights of the people against the claim of a minority to over-ride them, irrespective of all other considerations.

Finally, Emma implies that I am guilty of the same “intolerable arrogance” with which (she says) I charged the Jews. (I actually used this phrase of the Zionists, but let it pass.) And this because I have dared to speak of a “just demand” — referring to the Arab demand for democratic self-government. Well, of course, I may be wrong. Socialism may not be just. Anarchism may not be just. Franco may be a good man, the saviour of Spain, whom (in my “arrogance”) I have condemned. But I'm prepared to risk it; and I notice that Emma too has sufficient arrogance to take sides in a fight when it suits her. For my part I will say that if the cause of self-determination is not a just cause, then the word justice has no longer any meaning for me and can be left out of the discussion. I only know that self-determination is the basic principle of both socialism and anarchism as I understand them, and that I will fight every system of society in which this principle is not fundamental.

Reginald Reynolds

That is bad enough for a revolutionary socialist. Worse still is the inconsistency in pleading on behalf of land monopoly, to which the Arabs alone should have the right.

Perhaps my revolutionary education has been sadly neglected, but I have been taught that the land should belong to those who till the soil. With all of his deep-seated sympathies with the Arabs, our comrade cannot possibly deny that the Jews in Palestine have tilled the soil. Tens of thousands of them, young and deeply devout idealists, have flocked to Palestine, there to till the soil under the most trying pioneer conditions. They have reclaimed wastelands and have turned them into fertile fields and blooming gardens. Now I do not say that therefore Jews are entitled to more rights than the Arabs, but for an ardent socialist to say that the Jews have no business in Palestine seems to me rather a strange kind of socialism.

Moreover, Reginald Reynolds not only denies the Jews the right to asylum in Palestine, but he also insists that Australia, Madagascar and East Africa would be justified in closing their ports against the Jews. If all these countries are in their right, why not the Nazis in Germany or Austria? In fact, all countries. Unfortunately, our comrade does not suggest a single place where the Jews might find peace and security.

I take it that Reginald Reynolds believes in the right of asylum for political refugees. I am certain he resents the loss of this great principle, once the pride and glory of England, as much as I do. How then, can he reconcile his feelings about political refugees with his denial of asylum to the Jews. I must say I am puzzled.

Our friend waxes very hot about national independence for the Arabs and for all other peoples under British Dominion. I am not opposed to the struggle for it, but I do not see the same blessings in national independence under the capitalist régime. All the advancement claimed for it is like the claims for democracy, a delusion and a snare. One has to point out some of the countries that have achieved national independence. Poland, for instance, the Baltic States or some of the Balkan countries. Far from being progressive in the true sense, they have become Fascist. Political persecution is not less severe than under the Tsar, while anti-Semitism, formerly fostered from on top, has since infested every layer of social life in these countries.

However, since our friend champions national independence, why not be consistent and recognise the right of the Zionists or the Jews at large to national independence? If anything, their precarious condition, the fact that they are nowhere wanted, should entitle them to at least the same consideration that our comrade so earnestly gives to the Arabs.

I know of course that a great many of the Jews can lay no claim to being political refugees. On the contrary, most of them have remained indifferent to the persecution of workers, socialists, communists, trade-unionists and anarchists, so long as their own skins were safe. Like the middle-class in Germany and Austria, they have exploited labour and have been antagonistic to any attempt on the part of the masses to better their condition. Some German Jews had the temerity to say that they would not object to driving out the ‘OstJuden’ (Jews coming from Poland and other countries). All that is true, but the fact remains that since Hitler's ascendancy to power all Jews without exception have been subjected to the most fiendish persecution and the most horrible indignities, besides being robbed of all of the possessions. It therefore seems strange for a Socialist to deny these unfortunate people a chance of taking root in new countries, there to begin

a new life.

The last paragraph in ‘Palestine and Social Policy’ caps the climax. The author writes: “What does it matter who makes a demand or why it is made, or who pays the bill if that demand is just? To reject a just demand is to brand ourselves as friends of tyranny and oppression; to accept it and to work for it is not only our duty but the only policy that will expose the pretensions of our enemies.”

The question is, dear Reginald Reynolds, who is to decide what is a ‘just demand’? Unless one makes oneself guilty of the charge the writer hurls against the Jews, “the intolerable arrogance of people who regard their own race as superior”, one cannot very well decide whether the demand of natives for the monopoly of their country is any more just than the desperate need of millions of people who are slowly being exterminated.

In conclusion, I wish to say that my attitude to the whole tragic question is not dictated by my Jewish antecedents. It is motivated by my abhorrence of injustice, and man’s inhumanity to man. It is because of this that I have fought all my life for anarchism which alone will do away with the horrors of the capitalist régime and place all races and peoples, including the Jews, on a free and equal basis. Until then I consider it highly inconsistent for socialists and anarchists to discriminate in any shape or form against the Jews.

Emma Goldman
London, August, 1938

Reg. Reynolds Answers Emma Goldman on Palestine (1938)

From ‘Spain and the World’, September 16, 1938, London, UK

To the Editor, “Spain and the World,”

Dear Comrade,

As my dear friend Emma Goldman is anxious that I shall not be misunderstood she will appreciate this attempt to set right her own misconceptions regarding my views on Palestine.

I must thank Emma for the assurance given to her friends that I am not anti-Semitic; but I completely disagree with the statement that my article of July 29th “unfortunately gives such an impression.” No-one can show me a single sentence in it which, taken in its context, gives any such impression to an unprejudiced mind. Dr. Johnson once said: “Sir, I can give you an argument, but I cannot provide you with an intelligence.” I am in the same position, and cannot answer for what prejudice may read into my words. Bakunin was also called anti-Semitic.... [which he was -Ed. 2026]

At no point was my article concerned with Jews as a race or with Arabs as a race. It was concerned with the right of self-government which the Arabs claim and the Zionists oppose. In common with the Anarchists I believe that the ideal society is one where there is no government at all. But I also believe that where people do not yet realise this fact, democratic government that is to say, government by the explicit consent of at least a majority of the people is better than autocratic or bureaucratic government. The Anarchists in Spain seem to be impressed with the same fact, or they would not have given even limited co-operation to the Government against Franco.

But just as Anarchists realise that Fascism is worse than “democratic” capitalism, so most of them will agree with me that imperialism is worse, and for the same reasons. Those who cannot see this as a matter of common-sense should study and compare conditions — say — in India and the British colonies with conditions among British workers. I do not need Emma Goldman to tell me the limitations of “democracy,” or of national independence; but to regard such objectives simply as “a delusion and a snare” is to deny the whole basis upon which whatever liberty we possess has been built up, and the present basis of co-operation between Anarchists and other anti-fascists in Spain. And for my dear friend to say that she is “not opposed to the struggle” for national independence is surely a half-hearted gesture towards those who are bearing the brunt of the fight against British Imperialism. As I pointed out in my article, only active support will impress the colonial peoples; and if they receive such support from the Fascist Powers whilst Anarchists are content with being “not opposed to them,” I fear that the masses now suffering oppression under the Union Jack may form alarming conclusions as to who are their real friends. Whose fault will that be?

Personally I am not prepared to stand aloof from a struggle between oppressor and oppressed because the oppressed have not grasped 100% of the truth as I see it. I shall help the underdog because he is the underdog and because it is the only way of impressing him with my sincerity if I wish to teach him anything in the way of politics or economics. And I shall not be frightened by misrepresentations, intentional or unintentional. I know that to oppose British Imperialism in Palestine (and Zionism, its ally) is to invite the accusation of being anti-Semitic. I know that to criticise the Spanish Government or the French Front Populaire is to brand oneself as a “Trotsky-Fascist.” Neither prospect disturbs me in the least.

I am not impressed by the fact that Jewish workers have contributed financially to back up Jewish emigration to Palestine. British workers contribute to a number of foolish things, including Sir Walter Citrine’s salary. As to the statement that “the land should belong to those who till the soil,” I neither accept it nor see its relevance to Emma Goldman’s case. Ideally speaking, the land should “belong” in my opinion, to the whole community — since all wealth comes out of it. But if I accept Emma’s statement, then the land in Palestine should have belonged to the Arab peasant; and the Arab landlords had no right to sell it to Jewish immigrants who dispossessed these Arab tenants. That is the only sense I can make out of Emma’s statement, unless she means that the land belongs to whoever can grab it — i.e. that it belonged first to the Arab fellaheen but now belongs to those who pushed the Arab off. “Finding is keeping” is a good motto for conquistadores and imperialists, but not, I should have thought, for Anarchists.

Next there are three opinions which Emma attributes to me for which there is not the slightest foundation. I have nowhere “sponsored the Arab capitalist rights” and I have nowhere said that “the Jews have no business in Palestine.” Also I did not “justify” the closing of Australian ports against the Jews. Quite on the contrary. Discussing the views of the Australian representative at the Evian Conference, I said: “No Socialist or Anarchist would, I hope, endorse that view.” Is that justification? But I added that if Australia excluded Jews there would not be an attempt to force her to accept Jewish immigrants by landing an army of occupation. It was simply a statement of fact; but I am prepared to make it one of