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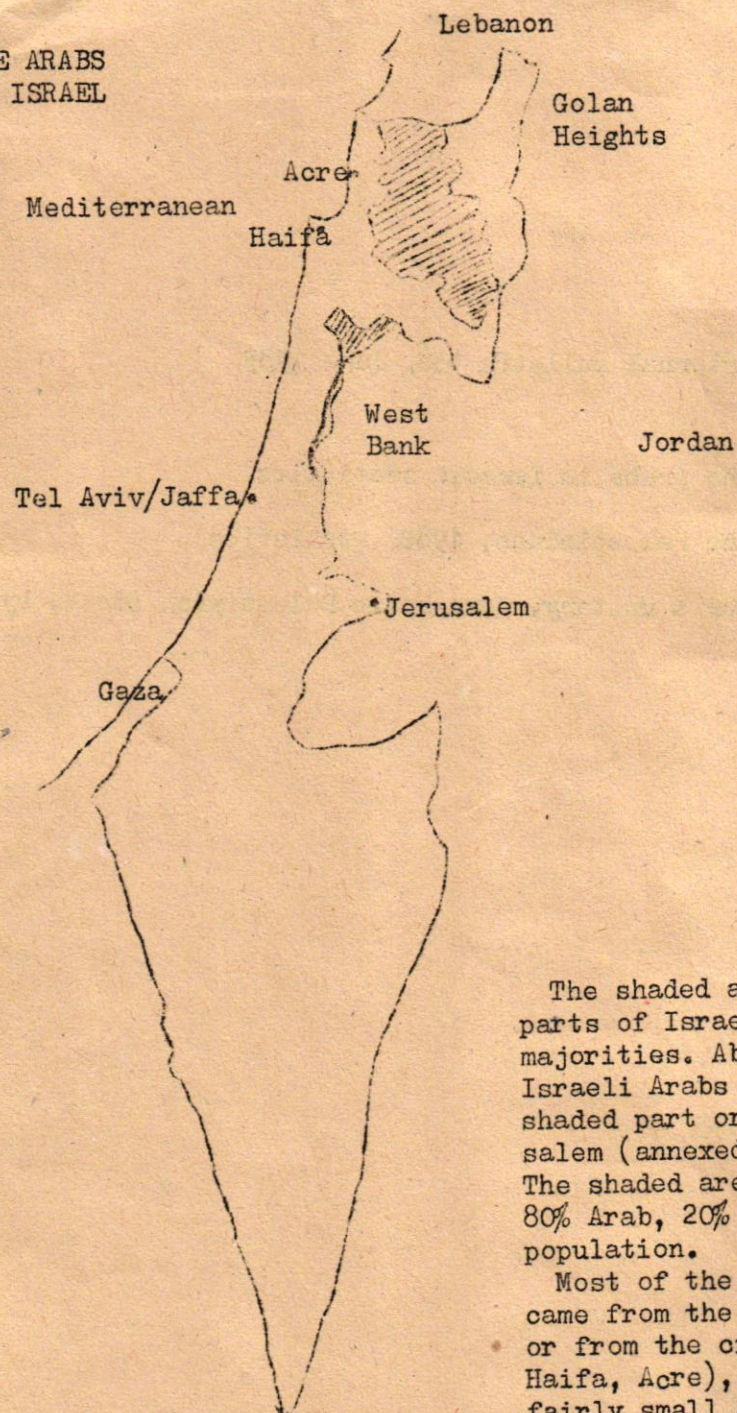
The Arabs in Israel: statistics

The Palestinians, 1980: statistics

For a unitary, democratic Palestinian state, by Wolf



# THE ARABS IN ISRAEL



The shaded areas are those parts of Israel with Arab majorities. About 75% of Israeli Arabs live in the shaded part or in East Jerusalem (annexed in 1967). The shaded area is about 80% Arab, 20% Jewish in population.

Most of the 1947-9 refugees came from the shaded areas or from the cities (Jaffa, Haifa, Acre), which now have fairly small Arab populations.

A big majority of the Jewish population - around 70% - lives along the coast, mainly in the big cities, or in Jerusalem.

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The Palestinians, 1980. Total: about 4½ million.

Pre-1967 Israel, excluding East Jerusalem ...	531,000
West Bank and East Jerusalem .....	818,000
Gaza Strip .....	477,000
Jordan .....	1,160,000
Lebanon .....	600,000
Syria .....	216,000
Kuwait .....	279,000
Saudi Arabia .....	127,000
UAE .....	35,000
Qatar .....	23,000
Elsewhere (various Arab countries, US, Western Europe) .....	400,000



## FOR A UNITARY, DEMOCRATIC PALESTINIAN STATE - WOLF

(The four points in the first section can be used as a short statement of position for voting.)

### THE BASIC POSITION

1. A democratic solution to the national conflicts between the Israeli Jews and the Palestinian Arabs can only take place within the framework of a single state. The intermingling of the two national groups is such that any territorial division would be unlikely to be democratic or provide a lasting solution to the conflict.
2. 'Such a unitary state would recognise and guarantee the collective rights and identities of both groups, including freedom of religion, language and education. These would be implemented by devolving powers in these areas to whichever level would assure the two communities the best control of their own affairs without imprisoning minorities. The Palestinians would have the right to live in any part of the state (which would cover the area of pre-1948 Palestine.
3. While defending the rights of the Israeli Jews, we recognise that at present it is the Palestinians who are the oppressed nation and give them unconditional support in their struggle against the Israeli state.
4. For a single Palestinian state to be realisable requires that at least a sizeable section of the Israeli population break from Zionism and the 'national consensus' currently existing in relation to the Palestinians. No solution is possible while the Israeli working class enjoys privileges at the expense of the Palestinians. Such a break will only come about if the Palestinians make it clear that they have no intention of suppressing the Jews and are willing to grant them the collective rights in a common Palestinian state.

### WHY A UNITARY STATE IS NECESSARY

The normal approach of Marxists to the national question has been to argue for the right of self-determination - that is, for the right of an oppressed nation to secede and form its own nation state. We generally support self-determination, not because we support nationalism or think that the nation state is the best political unit for socialism, but because it generally provides a democratic solution which ends national oppression and removes a divisive obstacle to developing class unity between the different national groups.

However the right to self-determination cannot be applied where the two national groups are intermingled and both claim the same territory with some degree of legitimacy. The self-determination of one group could only be at the expense of the other. We explicitly recognise this in the case of Ireland:

"There is a radical difference between the proposal for regional and local autonomy within a United Ireland, and the proposal of a separate, partitionist Northern Ireland state... The 'right to self-determination' of the Protestant community does not make sense. There is no territory naturally suited to the exercise of such 'self-determination'. Any Protestant state would entrap and oppress a large Catholic minority.... It would not be a democratic solution clearing the way for class struggle, but a sectarian solution, bitterly divisive for the working class." (Forum no.2 p37).

Likewise in Palestine there are no borders suited to a democratic solution based on separate states for the Israeli Jews and the Palestinians. Even if the present population were to fall into two distinct territories, there is still the problem of the Palestinians currently living outside pre-1948 Palestine who wish to return.



① The 4½ million Palestinians fall into three groups who are affected by different forms of national oppression:

- (a) those living in the occupied territories (just over 1 million) for whom it takes the form of military occupation and settlement;
- (b) those living in the pre-67 borders of Israel for whom it takes the form of second-class citizenship and, for many, not belonging to the state of their choice (about 750,000);
- (c) those scattered in other countries, whether as refugees or migrant labour, for whom it mainly takes the form of not having a state which they can live in.

202 The 750,000 Arabs in pre-67 Israel make up about 17% of the population. Of these about half are concentrated in the North, forming a majority in some areas. In the North the overall proportion of Arabs and Jews is about half and half, though increased Jewish settlement is aimed to reduce the proportion. Outside this area Arabs form about ¼ of the population of Jerusalem, 1/5 in the Haifa area and 1/10 in the South. Elsewhere the percentage is negligible. A pro-Israeli writer sympathetic to a West Bank/gaza state admits: "Given the patchwork pattern of population distribution, no boundary line can be devised that will encompass the whole of any ethnonational group while simultaneously excluding all members of other groups. Short of expulsion or genocide, ethnic heterogeneity will continue to be a fixture of the territory..." (Mark Heller: "A Palestinian State: the implications for Israel").

Of the Palestinian refugees about 10% lived in the areas which became Israel in 1948 prior to that date. Of these about half remain refugees. Many of those born in the camps since 1948 identify themselves as coming from the areas where their families lived before fleeing in 1948. Whether all of these Palestinians would return to those areas given the choice or whether they would accept a West Bank/Gaza state is a debatable point. However, given that the process of settlement and colonisation of these areas has been the root cause of their national oppression, it seems to me that the demand for the Palestinian right to return to those areas must be granted as part of a democratic solution. (How this could be done is discussed later.)

Given this population distribution and the precise form the national question takes in Palestine there are three different ways of dealing with the situation:

- (a) drawing boundaries which essentially maintain the existing majority-minority relationships using a recognised border, such as the pre-67 one. This would mean either leaving minorities within the new states or some form of population exchange;
- (b) drawing new boundaries by allowing pieces of territory with a majority different to that within the pre-67 borders to secede and join the other state (e.g. the areas of pre-67 Israel with Arab majorities);
- (c) recognising that a democratic solution cannot be based on a territorial division or redivision of pre-1948 Palestine.

#### The implications of Carolan's position

Carolan essentially takes the first of these three positions. The result of it would be arbitrary borders and continuing national conflict. What would happen to the Arabs in the areas of pre-67 Israel where they form a majority or a large minority? They would have three choices: either to remain second-class citizens in an even more exclusively Jewish state, or to remain in Israel as immigrant labour while being citizens of the Palestinian state or thirdly leaving to live in the Palestinian state. It is simply not true to assert as Carolan does, that "the Jews occupy a distinct territory (the pre-67 borders of Israel.)". The pre-67 borders have become the focus for a two states policy, not because they represent a consistent democratic solution but because they are considered by bodies such as the UN and a section of the PLO to be a basis on which negotiations with Israel might be possible.

At best such an approach would only provide a solution for the Palestinians already in the West Bank or Gaza or those willing to live there. What would happen to the Arabs in the areas of Israel in which they formed a majority or a large minority. They would have three choices: (a) to remain



second-class Israeli citizens in an even more exclusively Jewish state; (b) to remain in Israel as immigrant labour, while being citizens of the Palestinian state - another recipe for further discrimination; (c) leaving - whether voluntarily or more probably under duress - for the Palestinian state. None of these solutions are likely to lead to a lessening of national conflict.

(2) Given that Israel would remain the dominant economic and military force in the area and that Israel would remain essentially a state of the same type as at present - otherwise Carolan's position would be no more 'practical' than mine or Kinnell's - a West Bank/Gaza state would either have no room for independent action and be subject to Israeli domination or would very quickly come into conflict with Israeli national interests, probably leading to war. Neither of these situations would provide a basis for a long-term conciliation and fading away of national conflicts in the area.

#### Kinnell's position

Part of Kinnell's position seems to be the second position outlined above - that of redrawing borders to ensure that any states that come into existence do as far as possible represent the wishes of the populations within their borders. This at least has the merit of recognising that the pre-67 borders are undemocratic. If the national question in Palestine was merely one of national minorities wanting to form their own state or associate with another state, it would provide a feasible solution.

However it does not take account of the odd features of the situation which come from Israel being a state based on settlement of an area, whose previous inhabitants have not disappeared, but still have legitimate claims to rights within the same area. It is difficult to see how Kinnell's position is consistent with the Palestinian right of return, which he also supports. (Ironically, I agree here with Carolan that full Palestinian rights are incompatible with a two states solution. We draw diametrically opposed conclusions from it!)

It is also difficult to see how a West Bank/Gaza state would be a step towards the general solution Kinnell proposes. If a West Bank/Gaza state were to succeed in the aim of reducing national tensions Kinnell ascribes to it, it would have to become the status quo for relations between the two peoples for some considerable period of time. While, as Kinnell puts it in IB 135, the Palestinians could 'in principle force concessions', including the right for Arabs in Israel to secede to the other state, who would be able to enforce it? Presumably the Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza. How would this give the breathing space for reconciliation Kinnell talks of?

#### PALESTINIAN AND JEWISH RIGHTS

(3) A common state would have to be based on and guarantee the rights of both the Israeli Jews and the Palestinians to maintain their separate collective identities unhindered by the state and with control over those aspects of political life necessary to require them to do this. This differs from the 'classic' conception of the secular democratic state as advocated by the PLO in giving collective rights to the Jews within a 'unitary' state and offering such rights unconditionally.

Such rights would include freedom of religion and language, control of education, the rights of free political organisation etc. They could be implemented through a form of local autonomy where communities - whether Arab, Jewish or mixed - would be able to decide what provision would be made for these issues in their area.

Local autonomy is not however the cornerstone of my argument as Kinnell seems to think in IB 135. It merely seems to be the most likely way of guaranteeing to the furthest possible extent the rights of both communities. Some rights, however, such as the right to use either language would have to be guaranteed by the



central government. What is crucial is that the means exist for 'justice to be done' within the framework of a single state.

### National vs democratic rights

Kinnell's main argument against this is that it ignores what is fundamentally at stake - namely, the rights of two nations rather than merely democratic rights. In IB 135, he suggests that local autonomy would lead to one or other nation wishing to secede from a united state. Kinnell places considerable importance on both groups being nations, because in his argument it then follows that there can only be a solution that gives both nations separate states, whether federated or not.

However whether you choose to describe the Palestinians and Israeli Jews as nations or not is in practice largely irrelevant because there is no way full national rights (which include the right to a territory) can be put into effect for both nations without one oppressing the other. As Ellis puts it, "a nation state for one is incompatible with a nation state for the other." Kinnell himself seems to realise this in rejecting the application of the slogan of self-determination. (IB 134, page 4).

For what it's worth, I would break with the group's previous position of not recognising the Israeli Jews as a nation. However we should remain aware of some of the peculiarities of both national groups. Firstly, the national consciousness of the Israeli Jews has until now been based on the Zionist ideology of the right to an exclusive Jewish state in Palestine, a state which has been based on settlement of the territory previously occupied by the Palestinians. Whether, as Kinnell discusses, they feel themselves to be political Zionists in the full sense is irrelevant. Quite what form a Jewish national consciousness would take if the exclusivist, chauvinist and, usually, racist elements based on this ideology were to disappear (or even begin to break down) is highly problematic.

Secondly, the rights of the peoples of the area and whether they form nations or not cannot be asserted simply by reeling off a set of characteristics (language, culture, economy, territory) a la Stalin of 1912 and seeing how well they fit. On this basis, one would have to reject the Palestinians' claim to be a nation on the grounds that they do not have - and never have had - a distinct national economy or historically well-defined national territory.

It is precisely the fact that the Palestinian question is not a straightforward issue of the rights of nations or national minorities which makes it so intractable. Any programme we put forward must deal with three aspects of Palestinian oppression as well as the rights of the Jews. Firstly, they lack any territory in which to live. Secondly, in the West Bank and Gaza Strip they face a military occupation. Thirdly, within Israel the Arabs are treated as second-class citizens.

### THE REALISABILITY OF A SINGLE STATE SOLUTION

Is 'practicality' the criterion for our programme in the national question?

Carolyn refers sarcastically to our old position having an "alleged ability to do justice to everyone concerned", contrasting it to his approach, which starts from the real divisions that exist. Our approach however should be precisely that of what Lenin described as "consistent democracy". Our job is not that of acting as diplomatic advisors to the Palestinians or arguing about which policy is most likely to be acceptable to the Israeli working class at present given their present consciousness and attitude to the Palestinians. We are only interested in the national question from the viewpoint of finding a programme that represents a real solution to the national oppression and thus removes it as an obstacle to class unity.

Lenin poured scorn on Rosa Luxemburg (who was opposed to Polish independence from Russia because, as a Polish socialist she was frightened it would strengthen Polish nationalism) for emphasising that what was required was a 'practical' solution to



th national question:

"The whole task of the proletariat in the national question is 'unpractical' from the standpoint of the nationalist bourgeoisie of every nation, because the proletarians, opposed as they are to nationalism of every kind, demand 'abstract' equality; they demand, as a matter of principle, that there should be no privileges, however slight. Failing to grasp this, Rosa Luxemburg, by her misguided eulogy of practicality, has opened the door wide for the opportunists, and especially for opportunist concessions to Great-Russian nationalism."

(6) Carolan's position is similar to Rosa Luxemburg's, in that out of fears about the effects of the nationalism of the oppressed - the Palestinians - on the rights of the Israeli Jews, he looks for a 'practical' solution which avoids challenging the privileges of the oppressor nation. It is an attempt to find a short cut to a solution without any fundamental changes in the relationships between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Carolan's position amounts to saying that a solution will be achieved on the basis of the Palestinians giving up their unrealistic demands, so as to avoid having to face the thorny problem of how it is possible to break the Israeli workers from their current attitudes towards the Palestinians.

In fact, as Ellis points out, the possibility of even a West Bank/Gaza state coming about without some shift in the attitudes of the Israelis and the beginnings of some reconciliation between them and the Palestinians.

#### Forcible integration?

Carolan claims that any policy of a single state in Palestine must imply forcible integration of the two nationalities. Kinnell also seems to accept that the nations will want to hold on to their separation above all else, even if Israel was no longer a Zionist state.

(5) The policy I am proposing is unlikely to recommend itself to the bourgeoisies of the Arab states, who either want a deal with Israel or are not in any position to impose a solution anyhow. (Even if they were, I would oppose it as there would be no way that they would impose an even remotely democratic solution). It is based on the idea that both sides would have had to moved towards a recognition of the other's rights as a pre-condition of any lasting and fair arrangement. Carolan says this is impossible. Kinnell seems sometimes to accept this ("The stark fact is that the liberation of the oppressed nation - the Palestinians - depends inextricably on winning over a section of their oppressors") and at other times, when arguing for a West Bank state, to see it as something for the very distant future, if at all ("advice to the Palestinians to become super-internationalists and then to wait until the Israeli Jews are also super-internationalists").

Carolan argues that two elements in the programme of a unitary state make its voluntary acceptance by the Israelis impossible. His first point - and here Kinnell agrees - is that a single state is in itself a denial of Jewish national rights and thus unacceptable. On this basis, however, for the reasons outlined above, no solution will ever be possible if one (or both) nationalities continue to claim an exclusive right to even a part of the territory. If the Palestinians were to give real guarantees of Jewish rights of the type I have already mentioned, it would not be justified.

Carolan's second objection is that the right of the Palestinians to return to any part of pre-1948 Israel means dispossession of the Jews currently living there and would be resisted. However, the right of return does not necessarily require the restoration of every square inch of land to whoever owned it in 1948. Obviously given the length of time that has passed, changes in the economic structure of the country etc. this would be impossible. What is at issue is (a) the right of the Palestinians to return to live in those areas; (b) some form of compensation for land taken as part of an overall settlement; (c) removal of some recent settlements. Of these, only the third can be called dispossession - and it would also be required to set up a West Bank/Gaza state.



Both communities will have to make concessions for any solution to work. The Palestinians will have to recognise that moving towards their goals requires winning over a large section of the Jewish population. This in turn requires them to recognise the permanence of the Jews in the area and the collective rights which this implies. It probably also requires a change of tactics from one which emphasises guerilla action to one which puts more emphasis on political action and has an active orientation towards winning the trust of the Jews.

However, the main balance of concessions must come from the Israeli Jews as they are at present enjoying privileges as the oppressor nation. The national consensus across classes in Israel is not just maintained by Zionist ideology or an external threat, but also rests on the fact that all sections of society benefit from the present discriminatory and oppressive relationship to the Palestinians e.g. access to better or more secure jobs, land, more extensive political rights. As in the case of Ireland, it is often those sections of the population for whom the relative privilege is smallest who cling to it most - in this case, the working class Oriental Jews.

#### A 'de-Zionised' Jewish state?

For these reasons it seems to be unlikely that the Palestinians will have the room to manoeuvre and win concessions from Israel that would eventually end in a 'non-Zionist Jewish state', as Kinnell and Scott believe. Kinnell has a list of demands that Israel can 'in principle' concede without the Israelis "having to emancipate themselves in advance from all national prejudice". However it is unlikely that even demands such as a West Bank state will come about without a radical shift by a section of the Jewish population - not to becoming 'super-internationalists', but at least to generally favouring Palestinian rights and recognising their own responsibility for doing something to help bring them about.

#### Breaking the logjam

What forces then will break out of the vicious circle of mutual antagonism between the Palestinians and the Israelis? In the short term, it is difficult to be optimistic, whatever position you hold. It is possible that the national conflict would only be ended as a result of successful social revolutions elsewhere in the region, though clearly we cannot advocate that all the parties concerned wait around before trying to find a means of coming together. More positively, a number of developments have begun which undercut the basis on which Israel has been able to maintain 'national unity' in the past. The war in Lebanon has led to some questioning of Israel's claim to act militarily only in its own defence and to a war-weariness among some sections of the population. The economy is in more or less permanent crisis. The shift in US policy in the region lessens Israel's room for manoeuvre. None of these developments necessarily mean a progressive shift in general attitudes towards the Palestinians, but perhaps a few cracks are appearing in the general acceptance of the national interest in Israel.

~~xx~~ In such a situation it is difficult to assess what the effect of a Palestinian declaration of recognition of Jewish rights would have. It is however a precondition of any long-term progress.