

One Democratic State in Entire Historic Palestine – A Socialist Viewpoint

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I. Introduction

This article is a contribution to the criticism of Moshé Machover and Matzpen's position on the issue of Israeli Palestinian conflict and its resolution.ⁱ I have shared this position with my comrades in Matzpen for decades and defended it whole heartily in political conferences abroad and in my writings. However, Machover's refrain from supporting and actively participating in the ever-growing movement for a one democratic state solution among Palestinians and solidarity organizations as well as among Anti-Zionist Left groups has convinced me to re-examine the assumptions on which the objection is based. This I intend to do in my article.

My article continues a debate which has begun around Moshé Machover's article named "Standing the Test of Time," which appeared on July 19, 2012, in Weekly Worker no.923.ⁱⁱ The first part of the article focuses on the issue of the resolution of the conflict. It represents Matzpen's position since 1967-73 when the late Palestinian Trotskyist ideologue Jabra Nicola and Moshé Machover laid the principal framework to the question of the source of the conflict and its resolution.ⁱⁱⁱ During the years since then, Machover elaborated on Matzpen's earlier analysis, and tightened its assumed reliance on basic Marxist principles and socialist viewpoint.

In the July 2012 article "Standing the Test of Time," Machover summarized Matzpen's analysis in the following four points:

1. "Zionism is a colonising project, and Israel, its embodiment, is a settler state. The core of the Israeli-Arab conflict is the clash between Zionist colonisation and the indigenous people, the Palestinian Arabs[...]."
2. "We pointed out that Zionist colonisation belongs to a different species from, for example, that of South Africa and Algeria: rather than being based on exploiting the labour-power of the indigenous people, it sought to exclude and eliminate them." Machover emphasized that this observation has profound implications regarding the nature of the conflict and its eventual resolution. Hence, a substantial part of my analysis relates to this central observation.
3. "We insisted on the regional context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Due to the specific features of Zionist colonisation, the balance of power is heavily tilted in favor of Israel (backed by its imperialist sponsor) and against the Palestinian people. The imbalance could only be redressed, and Palestinian liberation would only become possible, as part of a revolutionary transformation of the region, by an Arab revolution led by the working class, which would overthrow the repressive regimes, unify the Arab east and put an end to imperialist domination over it[...]."
4. "Our regional view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict applied not only to the process whereby it would be resolved, but extended also to the form of the resolution itself. Unlike almost all who addressed the issue, we did not believe that a resolution would occur within the confines of Palestine (established by the British imperialists and their French allies following World War I). Thus, we did not advocate a so-called 'two-state

solution' in a repartitioned Palestine, nor a 'one-state solution' in a unitary Palestine. Instead, we envisaged incorporation of the two national groups – the Palestinian Arabs and the Hebrews (so-called Israeli Jews) – as units with equal rights within a socialist regional union or federation of the Arab east."

I will focus on refuting interrelated central presumptions of Moshé Machover and the sub-issues which derive from them. I will refute his claim that the Hebrew and Arab-Palestinian nations were both created by imperialism and Zionist colonialism and therefore deserve equal national rights in the future socialist Middle East. Another core claim of Machover's I address is that the resolution of the conflict is conditioned on the future defeat of imperialist rule in the region and its replacement by a regional socialist federal union. I will show how this claim disregards the Palestinian national movement and opposes the democratic struggle and democratic tasks undertaken by the one-state movement. The contention that the "conflict" cannot have a bourgeois nationalist resolution is based on an argument about the differences in the colonial models of Israel and South Africa. Machover emphasizes that this difference is central to his analysis of the conflict and his conclusion regarding its resolution. I aim to show that this assumed connection between the colonial model and the resolution is faulty.

II. Two National Groups Created by Imperialism

As mentioned, Machover assumes the existence of two nations in Palestine which have emerged in the process of imperialist and Zionist colonization. This assumption opens the way for claiming their equal national rights in the future socialist era of the Middle East - with which I'll deal later.

a. The Invention of the "Hebrew Nation"

Machover determines the creation of the "Hebrew nation" thusly: as the Zionist colonization of Palestine preceded – beginning with the first aliyah (Jewish immigration) of 1882-1903 and the second aliyah of 1904-14 and following World War I, gathering momentum under British protection – a new Hebrew settler nation was forming in this land. However, says Machover, the full self awareness of the settlers of being a Hebrew nation had been halted by the central premise of Zionist ideology. Namely, that "the settlers are part of a pre-existing Jewish nation, encompassing all Jews everywhere.

Machover misunderstands the Zionist settlers' existential need for Jewish identity. Nor does he recognize the central role of Jewish religion in the lives of the "secular" members of his fake "Hebrew nation."

Since its early days the settler community could not but adopt the Zionist premises which conferred legitimacy on the Zionist colonial project in which they enthusiastically participated. These premises consist of the recognition of the Jewish nation who has returned to its homeland and of its religion-based rights to the "Land of Yzrael." No genuine secular culture has been developed among them until this very day. Those who Machover considers to be "secular Israelis" – who adopt the Hebrew identity – have managed to live with this fundamental contradiction in their worldviews. This contradiction was summarized by the historian Amnon Krakotzkin as "we don't believe in God but God promised us this land."^{iv}

The myth of the Divine promise serves as the "ultimate legitimacy" for choosing Palestine for Zionist colonization despite the presence of the indigenous Palestinian population. Jewish religion and tradition supplied Zionism with a capacity to mask the colonialist project behind

the innocent “return to Zion.” The Late critical sociologist Baruch Kimmerling explains this urgent need for Jewish identity and religion:

"[The] essence of this society and state's right and reason to exist is embedded in symbols, ideas and religious scriptures—even if there has been an attempt to give them a secular re-interpretation and context . . . [This society] was made captive from the beginning by its choice of a target-territory for immigration and a place for its nation-building, for then neither the nation nor its culture could be built successfully apart from the religious context, even when its prophets, priests, builders and fighters saw themselves as completely secular. Indeed, says Kimmerling, "there are in Israel individuals and groups and even secular sub-cultures whose daily behavior and self-identity is secular, "But when the majority of the public in Israel relates to their collective national identity, this identity is defined by terminology, values, symbols and collective memory, most of which are anchored in the Jewish religion.”^v

Machover also ignores the fact that it was precisely the Zionist leadership and ideologues who nourished and cultivated the "distinct" images of the settlers' young generation. The “negation of exile” (*shlilat hagola*) was presented through the Zionist notion of “an empty land,” to which the Jewish people “returned” in order to renew their political and cultural life after two thousand years of exile.^{vi}

Against this background the images of the “sabara,” the un-“ghetto-like” (submissive and passive) "new Jew," were crystallized. His image has been portrayed as physically beautiful, masculine, determined, brave, proud, and healthy, known to have a “beautiful forelock and appearance”—(yefe hablorit ve hatoar). Underlying this mythological Eretz Israeli cultural hero is the sanctification of force and militarism so prominent in Zionist culture today.

The "distinct" identity of the young generation (the "youth") was not in contradiction to the Zionist ideology of a worldwide Jewish nation, as wrongly emphasized by Machover. On the contrary. It was systematically nourished by the Zionist leadership and ideologues. The youth were considered to be the jewel in the crown of the Zionist colonization. They accepted the authority of their leaders and willingly committed the tasks assigned to them: being at the frontline of the Zionist colonial project and ready to give their life for its goal of settling the land.^{vii}

Decades of cultivated "distinctiveness" prepared well the pre-state youth to commit the 1948 bloody mass ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people. They thus could be identified as "the silver tray on which the state of the Jews was given to the [Jewish]nation.”^{viii} No concept of a ‘Hebrew nation’ has ever replaced the deep commitment to Jewish identity among mainstream as well as "Left" Zionist settlers.^{ix} On the contrary the more the bloody nature of Zionist colonial expansion is being disclosed, its need for "Jewish" legitimization is growing as well.

On the road to advocating equal national rights to the fake "Hebrew nation" and the indigenous Palestinians, Machover revokes the existence of a centuries-long Palestinian nation. Palestinian nationalism is reduced to an equal status with that of the Hebrew nation. Both are assumed to be created recently by imperialism and Zionist colonialism.

b. Negating Historic Palestine and a Palestinian Nation

Moshé Machover determines that a Palestinian nation who saw Palestine as its homeland had not existed within the borders of "what is named Palestine" prior to the Zionist colonization. From late antiquity until the First World War, 'Palestine' was a term which was very rarely used - almost exclusively by European Christians. Also during centuries of Muslim rule, Palestine did not exist as a distinct geographic or administrative, let alone political entity. It was an integral part of greater Syria (consisting roughly of present-day "little" Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip). "Palestine" was sculptured as a separate political entity by the British Mandate as part of a package which included the Balfour Declaration. Hence, claims Machover, the talk of 'Historical Palestine' tends to foster the false impression that it was an authentic entity sanctified by long duration.

I am familiar with two studies published in English in the mid-90s' which refutes Machover's unequivocal determination on Palestinian nationalism. The first is the study of the Palestinian historian Rashid Khalidi on the evolution of modern Palestinian nationalism, focused almost entirely on the late Ottoman and early Mandate period (1880s through 1920s).^x Khalidi argues that an amorphous-Palestinian territory with an identifiable population, who shared a distinct identity, was already widely spread before the emergence of political Zionism. The prevailing attachment to the country as Palestinians consisted of patriotic feelings, local loyalties, Arabism, and religious sentiments.

Khalidi emphasizes that, like the identity of many people in the Arab world, the case of Palestinian identity has had difficulty being recognized due to its relationship with Arabism and Islam in particular and with other potent regional and local loyalties. In a path breaking article, Hebrew University historian Haim Gerber sheds more light on the reasons for ignoring centuries-long Palestinian nationalist identity.^{xi} He criticizes academic historians for failing to recognize the double collective identity of Palestinians which consists of both Palestinian and Arab nationalism:

It is a well-known anachronism of historians to treat areas within the Ottoman Empire (Egypt, Syria) as if they had a meaningful existence of their own in the pre-nationalist period. The term Palestine itself disappeared from Ottoman parlance and [hence] is not mentioned by the excellent studies now available on the country in the 16th to 18th centuries. There is no question that before the appearance of nationalism in the later part of the 19th century the major political community was Islam, whose actual political manifestation was the Ottoman state. It is assumed that as a consequence, no other form of collective identity could exist at the time.

Gerber argues that though the all-inclusive identity of Middle Eastern Muslims under the Ottomans was Islamic and Ottoman first, "territorial identities existed beneath them and these territorial communities are commensurate with the modern Middle Eastern states."^{xii} Little used sources from the 17th and 18th centuries presented in Gerber's article indicate some remarkable traces of awareness of territorial consciousness of Palestine and of prevailed feeling of its inhabitants as a distinct community which was accompanied with strong emotional attachment and even patriotism. Gerber's well informed article contradicts Machover's contention that since antiquity Palestine was a term used almost exclusively by European Christians.^{xiii}

Gerber's article is about a religious scholar from al Ramla, (Palestine), Khayr al-Din al-Ramli, who spoke of Filastin (Palestine) and "our country" in the 1600s – centuries before

modern nationalism. The main source in question is a two-volume fatwa (legal opinion) composed by the Palestinian mufti al-Ramli Palestin (1585-1670). His teachings were very popular and he was considered one of the most important jurists, if not the most important, in Greater Syria (a term not found in al-Ramli's collection) at the time. Gerber emphasizes that Ramli was a social leader and a very influential person in the area of Greater Syria in his own time and in the two centuries after his death. He sees this as extremely important for the argument of his paper because it shows that a Palestinian kind of "nationalism" existed during the entire period of the Ottoman rule.

"On many occasions," says Garber, "Al-Ramli mentions the concepts Filastin, bilddund (our country), al-Sham (Syria), Misr (Egypt), and di-yar (country), in senses that go far beyond "mere" objective geography. We are in fact looking at something that can only be called embryonic territorial awareness, though the reference is to social awareness rather than to a political one."^{xiv}

In one of his fatwas, Al-Rami speaks of the love of one's own place of birth as something that is not only natural but also incumbent on us as humans. "His words on this subject," says Garber, "are so emotional that they may well have some connection with his practicing exactly that kind of feeling which I can only refer to as an atavistic sort of patriotism."

Though al-Ramli was no doubt committed to the enforcement of Islamic law, he was also deeply involved with the society around him, both in his home town and in the entire Ottoman context. "All this means that what he said, and the language he used, were well known to several groups of people at the time, partly as an outcome of what he said but also partly because it stands to reason that he had used language well known to the people around him."

Garber notes that Khayr al-Din al-Ramli is not the only source attesting to the fact that the term "Palestine" did not actually die out. The term "Palestine" was also recently disclosed in an unpublished work on a 17th-century treatise on the virtues of al-Sham, Filastin, and the Holy Land written by a contemporary of al-Ramli, Salih ibn Muhammad al-Timartashi. Some other near-contemporaries of al-Ramli, in the early 19th century, used the term "Palestine," or "Palestinian" – a term which surely was well known to the readers of the fatwas.

III. The Nature of the Conflict and its Resolution

Machover's central observation that Zionist colonisation belongs to a different species from that of South Africa has profound implications regarding the nature of the conflict and its eventual resolution. Hence, I shall elaborate first and at length on the nature of the assumed differences between the two models and the resulting different resolutions for South African apartheid and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

a. Apartheid South Africa and Israel: Different Models of Colonization?

According to Machover, the phenomenon of settlers who emerge as "a nation" occurs with the particular form of colonialism which aims to exterminate the indigenous population, like in North America. On the other hand South African apartheid was based on white settler's exploitation of the colonized black majority's vital labor power. Hence, in South Africa, workers remained part of the economy and society while being denied basic civil rights. By contrast, neither pre-state Zionist colonization nor Israel's economy have been dependent on Palestinian labor in the same way that South Africa's capitalist mining and industry needed black African labor. Zionism deliberately, consciously and explicitly chose the other model:

use of indigenous labor power was to be avoided. The Palestinian Arabs are not regarded as a useful exploitable source of surplus labor. They were to be ethnically cleansed or – in Zionist parlance – “transferred.”

Delineating the differences between the two models of colonialism indeed clarifies the reason for the 48' mass ethnic cleansing and the ongoing piecemeal removal of Palestinians from the land. It also rightly points to the mass "transfer" idea which continues to loom in Zionist thinking – waiting for opportunity in which it can be implemented. However, Machover is mistaken in using the difference between the two colonial models to explain why, unlike in South Africa, a singular national unit of colonizers and colonized could not develop in Palestine. Due to the blacks' important role in the economy they could become members of one nation together with their oppressors, despite the fact that they were excluded from all white walks of life. Machover argues that this cannot happen in the colonial settler state of Israel, because it in turn gave rise to a Hebrew nation which insists on keeping clear boundaries of its 'national' social and cultural identity.

I reject the assumed connection between the colonial model and the rise of one nation in South Africa as opposed to Israel. Indeed, as mentioned, the idea of mass expulsion of the Palestinian people has been looming in Zionist thinking since its onset. However, until the Zionist aspirations for a mass expulsion can be implemented, Israel has consolidated its rule over the '67 occupied territories and all signs indicate that it intends to stay there for decades. *Thus, a singular Zionist apartheid political and economic regime has emerged throughout entire Historic Palestine.* Israel's capitalist elite profit much from the captive Palestinian economy and from the exploitation of Palestinian workers and peasants.

This system of control changed the nature of Palestinian labour, which has increasingly become a tap that could be turned on or off according to the economic and political situation and the needs of Israeli capital.^{xv} Beginning in 1993, Israel moved to substitute Palestinian labour with immigrant labor. (In the 2000's the proportion of the Palestinian labor force working inside Israel was almost half of what it had been in the 90s'). Still tens thousands Palestinians are directly employed in Israel under appalling conditions or in the industrial zones in the west bank. Different governmental projects in which European companies are involved have been constructing the infrastructure for consolidating and expanding Israel's control of the West Bank as well as de facto annexing large parts of it to Israel "proper".

A case in hand is the over 200 Palestinians who are employed on boring tunnels in the West Bank, as part of the so-called A1 Railway, Israel's largest infrastructure project in a decade. It aims at accomplishing a high-speed train link between Jerusalem and the Tel Aviv railway for which Palestinian lands were confiscated in violation of international laws. Israel has contracted a handful of international companies to help with the line's construction which, as in other running projects, share the profits exerted from the enormous exploitation of Palestinian labor power.^{xvi} The multifaceted direct exploitation of Palestinian workers and farmers has become part and parcel of the occupation's oppression. Thus, Palestinians in the Jordan Valley are forced to lease some land from the settlers because of a shortage of agriculture land and water, which Israeli policy in the Jordan Valley has brought on, and because of limitations placed on the marketing of their produce. These lands have been appropriated in the past from Palestinian villages.^{xvii}

Regarding the exploitation of the Palestinian labor force by their own people: Adam Hanieh ("The Oslo Illusion," *The Bullet Socialist Project*, E-Bulletin No. 832, 2013) emphasizes that

after the 2000's reduction of the Palestinian labor force working within the green line, the majority of Palestinians became increasingly dependent on public-sector employment within the Palestinian Authority (PA), including the transfer payments made by it to families of prisoners, martyrs, or the needy. Palestinians also have become dependent on the private sector which provides substantial employment, particularly in the area of services. However, the entire economy, public and private, is under full Israeli control due to its power over the Palestinian Authority.

Thus the exploitation of the '67 Palestinian labor force by the collaborationist PA and its comprador bourgeoisie should be seen as part of the Israeli economy like the Palestinian citizens of Israel who are used as 'cheap labor'. The entirety of Historic Palestine has at this point been subsumed into the Israeli economy, in a way which in principle is not so dissimilar to that of apartheid South Africa. Hence the very theoretical basis for Machover's explanation to the "one nation" in South Africa is revealed to be shaky.

It is true that the Palestinian labour force does not play the same kind of role in major industry as do the blacks in apartheid South Africa. The full control of Israel over the PA significantly impacts the relations of forces in Palestine. However, what I intend to emphasize here is that even the assumed economic leverage of the blacks was not enough for achieving the revolutionary aims of their liberation movement. This point and the importance of the nature of the struggle in notwithstanding the model of colonial regime will be addressed below.

b. The ANC Accord: An Erroneous Example

Moshe Machover perceives a need for the consent of the 'two sides' to accept the 'Socialist Federative' solution. Especially important, is the consent of the stronger side – the Israeli Hebrew. He argues that it is incumbent on any socialist proposing a just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to provide, or at least to outline, a strategy for getting both nationalities to abide by it. By far, the more problematic is the stronger side, the Israeli Hebrews.

According to Machover, the Hebrew agreement is needed, due to the fact that the Palestinians lack the means of coercion or persuasion, to induce the Hebrew nation to give up its present oppressive privilege and overwhelming dominant position. Most significant, Machover argues, is that the Palestinians confined in the '67 enclaves have little or no economic leverage against the "Hebrews" as they play no significant part in the Israeli economy. In the colonial model of apartheid South Africa the relationship of forces was different than in Palestine. Accordingly, he contends that the blacks could put pressure on the white bourgeoisie to agree to their demand for a democratic South Africa thus creating a balance of forces that made resolution possible.

Machover's analysis on the reasons for the South African resolution to end apartheid and its assumed black victory is totally mistaken. According to Machover the power of the black working class who were economically indispensable caused the white settlers' leaders to accept "the generous deal" offered to them by the liberation movement.

Indeed the white bourgeoisie feared that the strengthened radicalization of the anti-apartheid struggle would turn into social revolution that would destroy the basis of their socio-economic hegemony. Machover refrains from clarifying the nature of the "generous deal" which did away only with the political parts of apartheid. In fact the "deal" was far from

anything that resembles the democratic revolution which presumably took place in South Africa. Nevertheless, we are left with the misleading impression that the South African case confirms Machover's theory: namely, that the colonial model of South Africa accounts for the presumed victory of the blacks in the democratization of apartheid South Africa while the colonial model of Israel excludes the possibility for a bourgeois nationalist resolution.

But, the South African case actually highlights the weakness of that theory. Among other things it clarifies the shortcomings of attributing such a great significance to the blacks' power due to the dependency of the whites on their labor. History shows that no bourgeoisie would easily give up the foundations of its power even vis-à-vis a strong resistance of the people under its rule. The bourgeoisie would use cooptation and other forms of temptations in order to mitigate the positions of the leaders of the liberation struggle. They would thus agree only if the demands for change retained the capitalist framework which ensures their socioeconomic rule. The bourgeoisie know well that they are capable of managing political transitions without losing their real power.

We socialists were familiar with the betrayal of the ANC-Communist party leadership when they insisted on preserving the white economic and political privileges as a precondition to the end of apartheid. They thus pushed the preservation of all 'national' rights for 'whites,' including their right to their property and their land. Democracy was thus achieved only within the formal political and legal parameters of a limited capitalist democracy - while the *de facto* apartheid has not changed. Our analysis was recently confirmed by Ronnie Kasrils who was part of the ANC's failing leadership that named the agreement the "Devils Pact."^{xviii}

The shaky theoretical basis for attributing power to the oppressed blacks to win their democratic aims refutes Machover's claim that the opposite is true for a democratic revolution in Palestine. The economic necessity of the black population as laborers was ultimately not sufficient leverage for demanding an end to the white hegemony of the socioeconomic structure that continues to exploit their "indispensable" labor. Indeed determined struggle for liberation and commitment to the revolutionary goals may be even more important than the "objective" factors of the colonial model.

IV. A Resolution Conditioned on Equal Rights to the Assumed Two Recent Nationalities

I fully agree with Moshé Machover that the most fundamental element in a genuine resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is the removal of its fundamental cause – the Zionist colonization project. This means: the de-Zionisation of Israel and the repudiation of the Zionist claim that the Jews at large have a special right in the 'Land of Israel.' Also I share his vision of an anti-imperialist, socialist Middle East. However, I strongly reject the form of the resolution Machover envisages and the route which leads to it.

One dimension of Machover's vision of a resolution is granting equal national rights to the two national units – the fake Hebrew nation and the historic Palestinian nation – and the incorporation of them within a socialist regional union or federation of the Arab east. Here he further argues that as socialists we must insist on these equal rights as a minimal necessary condition to the resolution of the conflict because Socialists cannot ever tolerate any national privilege, or national inequality.

Inventing the Hebrew nation and placing it on the same level as the Palestinian nation allows Machover to present a presumed homogenous "socialist" approach which recognizes "nations" and their equal rights for self-determination. However, the Marxist call for self-determination has never placed an equal sign between the rights of the oppressed and their oppressors.

What Machover suggests implies that the subjugated Palestinians should *guarantee* the Zionist colonialists that in the post-Zionist socialist federation they would be granted equal rights for self-determination. The conditioning of the resolution on the far future regional socialist revolution is justified by mistaken suppositions: the disregard for the Palestinian national movement and the negation of democratic revolution and democratic tasks as a condition for the socialist revolution. These propositions underlie Machover's opposition to the one-state movement which in turn calls for a determinate struggle for independence within a secular democratic state in entire historic Palestine.

V. Disregard for Palestinian National Movement for Independence and the One-State Resolution

Machover's negation of Historic Palestine and a centuries-long Palestinian nation results in belittling the role of the Palestinian national movement. More specifically, he rejects the viewpoint which sees the Palestinian national struggle for independence as a democratic struggle which has to be launched prior to the establishment of a socialist Middle East. He does not recognize the national struggle as a condition for opening the way for the socialist struggle.

Machover emphasizes that as socialists we should reject not only any ideology of colonization and oppression, but also all nationalism, including the nationalist ideology of an oppressed people struggling for national liberation. He warns us from a too easy slide from support for a national liberation struggle – which is our unwavering duty as socialists – into accommodation with the bourgeois or petty-bourgeois. Hence his disregard for the Palestinian national movement whose bourgeois and petty-bourgeois nationalist ideology fetishizes the Palestinian homeland as a Lost Paradise, to be regained.

I agree with Machover's criteria for adopting an independent position of socialists regarding the Palestinian national struggle and the resolution to the "conflict." I support his claim that in particular, it is incumbent on socialists to be clear as to the relationship between the liberation of the Palestinian people and the struggle for socialism. However, precisely because of the importance of this relationship, I reject Machover's support for "a direct route to socialism" in the Middle East and Palestine. The realization of a socialist revolution in the region can not be abstracted from or counter-posed to the democratic tasks of the revolution which are embodied in the one-state perspective: the struggle for national self-determination of the oppressed in one democratic state in Historic Palestine.

Machover refrains from specifying those "socialists" whose positions on movements for national independence he claims to represent. He thus avoids the confrontation with Lenin, Trotsky and other Marxists thinkers whose perspective about the question of the struggle for independence of oppressed nations is in contradiction to his own.

Lenin recognized the right of nations for political (and not only cultural) self-determination. He saw the struggle for it as a democratic task which does not contradict the fight for socialism but supports it. In his theses on "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Self-Determination of

Nations” Lenin states: “It would be utterly false to think that the fight for democracy diverts the proletariat from the socialist revolution. To the contrary: just as victorious socialism which does not bring about complete democracy is impossible, so also the proletariat which fails to conduct an all-sided, consistent and revolutionary struggle for democracy cannot prepare itself for victory over the bourgeoisie.”

Lenin is well aware that national struggles are often led by the bourgeois. But he emphasizes that the proletariat is obliged to participate in them because the struggle for democracy is the necessary *precondition* of the struggle for socialism: “In so far as the bourgeois of the oppressed nation is fighting against the oppressor,” he writes, “so far are we in all cases, more decisively than any others, in favour of it, because we are the undaunted and consistent enemies of all oppression.”^{xix}

Machover ignores other well known Marxist thinkers who support national struggles against colonialism without sharing Machover's concern about their bourgeois or petit bourgeois nature. Aijaz Ahmad for example sees anti-colonial nationalism as an inevitable stage in the battle for ending imperialist oppression. In the context of his sharp criticism against theories of multiculturalism and identity politics for their generalized rejection of nationalism he says: They fail to distinguish between different kinds of nationalisms: those which are indeed ‘chauvinist and fascist’ and progressive ones that express the will of the people struggling for self-determination and liberation from imperialism and colonialism.

On the necessity of nationalism for anti-colonial movements for independence, Ahmad says: “They cannot just forgo nationalism. They have to go through it, transform their nation-state in tangible ways, and then arrive at the other side.”^{xx}

Trotsky's Transitional Program (and permanent revolution) adds an important layer to the Marxist perspective which contradicts Machover's advocacy for taking the direct path to socialism. It is a program for building and theoretically arming a mass force that fulfils the democratic tasks. They are an indispensable means of providing a bridge from the workers' present conditions and level of understanding to the conception of the socialist revolution. Capitalism can no longer afford steady improvements or lasting reforms. Hence the working class will accelerate the struggle aimed at defending and extending its gains. In the course of the struggle it will realize that what is involved is the need to carry through the socialist revolution. The Transitional Program thus clarifies the role of the one-state solution within the general strategy for building socialism in the region: the one-state movement embodies the central necessary transitional demands for reaching this vision.

Also Eric Hobsbawm recognizes the important role of anti-colonial national movements despite the fact that very often their nationalist identity was created by imperialism and without relating to their class origin: “In the ‘dependent’ world of the first half of the twentieth century, and for obvious reasons especially in the colonized part of it, movements for national liberation and independence were the main agents for the political emancipation of most of the globe, that is to say for elimination of imperial administration and more significant direct military domination by the imperial powers, a situation that would have appeared almost inconceivable even half a century ago.”^{xxi}

To remind the reader: The exclusion of a Palestinian-determined struggle for national liberation from the equation of the relationship of forces opens the way for Machover's “socialist first” resolution of the conflict. Machover’s argument is based on the assumption

that the struggle for independence, led by the petite bourgeoisie Palestinian national movement aims at a bourgeois nationalist resolution of the conflict which is unconditioned by a socialist revolution and would obstruct the way to socialism. Therefore a socialist region free of imperialism and Zionism is a precondition to a resolution in which the national demands of the two nations would be addressed.

In addition to the theoretical faults on which Machover's view is built, it fails to draw lessons from the nature of the democratic struggles which have taken place in the post-colonial era, including the “Arab spring.” These struggles against austerity and for political freedom are by definition struggles against a central dimension of imperialism, neo-liberalism and their political local agents. “Bread, freedom, social justice and human dignity” are the demands included in the statement of the Revolutionary Socialists of Egypt (August 5 2013). In the post-colonial world these democratic tasks are on the agenda of the working classes more than ever before.

Nevertheless it's not the working class parties who lead these uprisings. This is so even when the democratic demands move beyond political and human rights and include trade unions rights and anti wild privatization policies. Thus, for example, despite the fact that the Turkish uprising set demands that relate directly to the rights of the working classes and peasants, their political organizations and the trade unions have not played an active role in the uprising. This is confirmed in a recent interview with the Dogan Fennibay, a secretary of the Workers' Fraternity Party (IKP):

A large percentage of the demonstrators do not have a link to any political or economic organizations[...] The majority of union confederations (DISK and KESK) have only participated in the events in a limited manner, or not at all. In short, while individual workers are participating in the actions, organized labor has not yet come together with the youth.^{xxii}

Indeed, democratic tasks can never be completed under capitalism. Hence the uprisings of the exploited classes and oppressed nationalities will continue to breakout time and again. Their failed experiences make the masses realize that their issues cannot be solved in the framework of the current regimes and that capitalism is the source of their oppression. Then, under the leadership of the organized working class, we begin the struggle for socialism. This process is the essence of the Permanent Revolution theory which has stood the test of time.^{xxiii}

The democratic tasks have been ever-pressing and imperative for the Palestinians who are prey to the most brutal oppression and exploitation throughout Historic Palestine. Their primary aims are national liberation, the return of the refugees, the unification of the Palestinian people in their historic homeland, a true political democracy and a non-racial state in the entirety of Palestine.

As said, all these issues are included in the agenda of the movement for one democratic and secular state. Its call for a one-state resolution has been spreading through entire Historic Palestine, the refugee camps and the Diaspora. Underlying the Palestinian and solidarity single-issue organizations is the demand for the unity of the Palestinian people in their homeland. Thus, the Palestinian leadership of the BDS movement sees itself as representing the oppression of the Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line. Movements like Jews for Palestinian Right of Return call for one democratic state. The awareness of the connection

between different democratic demands and the struggle for the one-state resolution has been shared by a radicalized public here and abroad.

The very struggle for a one-state solution constitutes a challenge against the imperialist order in Middle East of which the Zionist colonial state is its cornerstone. Hence as socialists, we cannot stay neutral to the issue of the resolution of the conflict. Joining the movement for one secular democratic state in Historic Palestine should be perceived as part and parcel of our struggle against US imperialism and the Zionist settler state of Israel and for socialism in the Middle East.

The author wishes to offer many thanks to Mich Levy for her wise comments and language editing on an earlier version of the article - a large part of which is included in the present version.

Tikva Honig-Parnass was raised in the Jewish community of pre-state Palestine, fought in the 1948 war and served as the secretary of the then Radical Left Zionist Party of Mapam (The Unified Workers Party) in the Knesset (1951-1954). In '60 she definitively broke with Zionism and joined the ranks of the Israeli Socialist Organization, known as "Matzpen." She is author of "False Prophets of Peace" and co-edited "Between the Lines" with Toufic Haddad – both published by Haymarket Books.

ⁱ See Machover articles: Moshé Machover, "Resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: A Socialist View point" *Weekly Worker* 757 (2009). Included in Machover, *Israelis and Palestinians, Conflict and Resolution*, Haymarket Books 2012 PP 284-297; *Israelis and Palestinians: Conflict & resolution* published in *ISR Issue* #65 of May 2009; "Standing the Test of Time," *Weekly Worker* no.923 July19, 2012; "Zionist myths: Hebrew versus Jewish identity," *Weekly Worker* 962 (May 16 2013 This article is an expanded version of a talk given by Machover on March 3, 2013, at the London conference ("Reclaiming an Alternative Jewish Culture and Identity").

ⁱⁱ .See "Last Resort," David Walton's response to Machover, a letter to the editor, *Weekly Worker*, (July 26 2012) and Moshe Machover response to him: " False analogy, August 6, 2012". See also Ralph Schoenman, "Moshé Machover's Sleight of Hand," a letter to the editor, *Weekly Worker*, August 6, 2013

ⁱⁱⁱ See articles in Moshé Machover, *Israelis and Palestinians: Conflict and Resolution* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012), 7-35.

^{iv} A telling example for the religiously-based belief in the rights of Jews to the land is my experience at my grandchild's secular elementary school in north of Tel Aviv. It was a ceremony which took-place on the memorial day for the soldiers who have been killed in the Israeli wars. Hundreds of students and their parents, as well as the bereaved families were present in this commemoration gathering. The event was opened with a boy wearing a skullcap reading from the Bible the promise of God to Abraham: "Lift up now your eyes, and look from the place where you are northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: For all the land which you see, to you will I give it, and to your seed forever." (Genesis 13:15) When I spoke with a number of parents and guests after the ceremony ended not one of them expressed any wonder at this religious message. On the contrary they whole heartily praised the "wonderful" opening. The biblical message just reconfirmed their commitment to Zionist cause and their right to the land.

^v Baruch Kimmerling, "Neither Democratic nor Jewish," *Haaretz*, December 27, 1996.

^{vi} See Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, "Exile Within Sovereignty: On "'Denial of Exile' in Israeli Culture," *Theory and Criticism* (Autumn 1992), 28–55, and continued in *Theory and Criticism* (Autumn 1994), 113-132.

^{vii} The glorification of the young generation is expressed in a song which was very popular among pre-1948 Left youth movements including the Marxist Hashomer Hatzair: "The song of the youth, [is] the song of our future / a song of revival, building and Aliya [Jewish immigration] / our brothers will come streaming from Diaspora / [our] homeland is coming back to life [Our] homeland :who has done all this wander? / Homeland: who has erected all this? / It is your hand, your hand that is sawing / It is your hand, your hand that is planting /As long as we have the youth in our homeland /The vision of the [Jewish] nation [Am Yizrael] will definitely be realized."

^{viii} This is a line from a well known poem by Nathan Alterman named "The Silver Tray." It has become a kind of a national anthem read and staged on "Independence Day."

^{ix} See Tikva Honig-Parnass, *False Prophets of Peace: Liberal Zionism and the Struggle for Palestine* (Chicago: Haymarket, 2011), chapter 4, "The Theocratic Jewish State," 69-89.

^x Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University, 2009).

^{xi} I am grateful to Tom Pessah who published on his Facebook wall the reference to this article- emphasizing its importance for the issue of Palestinian national identity : Haim Gerber, "'Palestine' and Other Territorial Concepts in the 17th Century," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 30 (1998): 563-572.

^{xii} Gerber, "Palestine," 563-572.

^{xiii} Gerber mentions that also the well known historian Yoram Porath "expressed a hunch that on a popular level the term Palestine continued to be used during these centuries." Yehoshua Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestine-Arab National Movement 1918-1929* (Routledge, 1995), 28.

^{xiv} "In classical Islam, says Gerber, "Filastin (Palestine was the name given to the former Roman province of Palaestina Prima, Jund Filastin, in the Islamic state. This province stretched from the Sinai Desert in the south to a line connecting Beisan to an unknown point on the Mediterranean somewhere south of Acre. As mentioned, the concept of Jund Filastin was no longer used by the Mamluk and Ottoman states, and hence there is a widespread consensus that the concept disappeared."

^{xv} Adam Hanieh, "The Oslo Illusion," *The Bullet Socialist Project*, E-Bulletin No. 832, 2013.

^{xvi} See Jessica Purkiss, "Workers on Israel's illegal railway robbed of half their pay," *The Electronic Intifada*, 25 July 2013.

^{xvii} See Amira Hass, "West Bank water shortage forcing Palestinians to lease land from settlers," *Haaretz*, August 2 2013. See also A Position Paper by "Worker's Line," August 2013, on the exploitation of Palestinians from the '67 Occupied Territories who work inside the Green line and in settlements and industrial parks in the West Bank.

^{xviii} "Eager to assume political office (myself no less than others) [the ANC/Communist Party] readily accepted this devil's pact, only to be damned in the process." Moreover he condemns the very road of negotiations which stopped the struggle: "Inexcusably, we had lost faith in the ability of our own revolutionary masses to overcome all obstacles" [...] "To break apartheid rule through negotiation, rather than a bloody civil war, seemed then an option too good to be ignored. However, at that time, the balance of power was with the ANC, and conditions were favourable for more radical change at the negotiating table than we ultimately accepted [...] In Ronnie Kasrils, "How the ANC's Faustian Pact sold out South Africa's poorest," *The Guardian*, Monday 24 June 2013 , accessed June 17, 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2013/jun/24/anc-faustian-pact-mandela-fatal-error> .

^{xix} Lenin: *On the Right of Self-Determination of Nations* (1916). On face value one may mistakenly assume that Machover adopts Rosa Luxemburg's position in the debate with Lenin on the National problem. However it is not by accident that he does not relate to it along side with his refrain from committing to any other Marxist ideologue or stream. Luxemburg would have never agreed to equal national rights for the oppressor and oppressed nation.

^{xx} Aijaz Ahmad, “Culture, Nationalism and the Role of the Intellectuals: An Interview,” in Aijaz Ahmad, *Lineages of the Present* (New Delhi, India: Tulika, 1996), 396-428 Ahmad, Culture, Nationalism and the Role of the Intellectuals: An Interview,” 396-428.

^{xxi} E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Second Edition, (Cambridge: University, 1990), 169.

^{xxii} “Revolt in Turkey: An Interview with Turkish Marxist Dogan Fennibay,” *Socialist Organizer*, June 26 2013, accessed June 17, 2013, <http://socialistorganizer.org/revolt-in-turkey-interview-with-turkish-marxist-dogan-fennibay/> .

^{xxiii} See Paul D'Amato “The Necessity of Permanent Revolutio,” *ISR* Issue 48, July-August 2006.