

protest strikes by several thousand workers. Later the freezing of wages in 1950 was decreed.

As a result of these wage-cuts and the intensified speedup, the capitalists, local and foreign, whose profits were not restricted, became the chief beneficiaries of the austerity program. This was the reality of that "planned economy aimed at the full implementation of the Zionist-Socialist ideal" which Ben Gurion had promised shortly after the election.³⁶ At the helm of the "planned economy" stood banker Hoofien, whose conception of how to solve Israel's problems may be gleaned from his statement in 1946 when he appeared as a spokesman for the Jewish Agency before the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry:

"We have been able to make this Jewish economy of Palestine a sound business proposition at least in the eyes of the City of London, not to mention other circles, and this has at no time been affected by the political uncertainties. Once the position becomes stabilized and Great Britain gradually begins to build up her foreign investments again, as I am very sure she will, then one can confidently assume the City will show the same sensible and friendly interest which we have had so much reason to be thankful for in the past. I may perhaps here express the hope and the confidence that the United States will enter into friendly competition in this particular respect."³⁷

In the period that followed this statement Jews were killed, jailed, and deprived of elementary rights thanks to Great Britain's "foreign investments"; they were compelled to wage a bloody war forced upon them by those "foreign investments"; and they encountered the "friendly competition" of the United States in the shape of a knife in their backs. Nevertheless, they won with their own sweat and blood—and the help of socialist Russia and her allies—independence and statehood. But for banker Hoofien and his Labor handymen only one thing had changed since 1946: they were now looking for salvation chiefly to Wall Street and Washington rather than to London's City.

X. Labor: Strength and Weakness

Physical labor is held in unusually high esteem in Israel. Manual labor was both a material necessity in an undeveloped country and a social necessity if the warped occupational pattern imposed on the Jewish people by centuries of persecution were to be changed. Productive labor, especially on the land, therefore became one of the tenets of Zionism in Palestine. At times this has even been made into a kind of fetish, to the point where among the youth—descendants of scholars, writers, physicians, and scientists—a marked strain of anti-intellectualism has developed.

Of course, as hundreds of thousands of non-Zionist newcomers enter the country, and as its economic and social structure develops along capitalist lines, these values are changing. Yet the underlying labor emphasis is likely to persist, drawing strength from the trade union movement and the workers' political parties—an emphasis that is not necessarily socialist even though it often wears the trappings of socialism.

All this serves to underline the fact that the working class, like almost everything else in Jewish Palestine, is a synthetic product. It came into being not as a result of spontaneous historic processes—not through the draconic dispossession of free peasants from the land, as in England and most of Europe; not through the concentration of land ownership, as in Virginia; nor through the expropriation of debt-ridden small producers, as in other parts of the American colonies. In Palestine the Jewish working class was created as an agricultural proletariat through the deliberate acts of middle-class immigrants who chose to work on the land rather than continue in trade or the professions. These were the Bilus of the 1880's and

their successors. Of course, there were handicraftsmen in the tiny Jewish community that existed in Palestine before the coming of the Bilus, but this community lived on the periphery of a pre-capitalist Arab economy and lacked the potentialities of nationhood. Wage-labor did not become predominant until the organized colonization of Palestine—first under the aegis of Baron de Rothschild and later of the Zionist movement—began to establish a new Yishuv on a capitalist basis.

The labor movement in Jewish Palestine also developed somewhat differently from that in other countries. It originated among the agricultural rather than the industrial workers. And almost from the beginning it combined trade unionism with colonization work, political activity, and mutual aid. The first workers' organizations arose in the colonies in the 1880's and 1890's, but they were weak and ephemeral. The first strike ever recorded in Palestine was in 1902 at Zuckermann's printing shop in Jerusalem.¹ But Jerusalem was hardly typical since at that time it stood outside the ambit of Zionist activity. Its Jewish population consisted overwhelmingly of members of the old Palestinian Sephardic community and of pious newcomers from Eastern Europe who lived on chaluka (charity distribution) contributed by their home communities. The mainstream of Jewish labor organization in Palestine continued for many years to flow through agriculture.

The modern trade union movement may be said to have begun with the launching in 1911 of an agricultural workers' union in Judea. In 1914 the farm workers in Galilee and Samaria also formed unions. These three became the precursors of the present-day Histadrut,* the General Federation of Jewish Labor in Palestine. This federation was founded at a conference in Haifa, December 5-8, 1920. Eighty-seven delegates, representing 4,333 workers, were present. The voting for delegates and representation on the General Council elected by the convention were based on political groupings. This has continued to be the practice in the Histadrut. Three political parties were represented at the founding convention:

*The word "histadrut" means literally "organization." The full name of the labor federation is Histadrut Haklalit Shel Haovdim Haivrim Be-Eretz Yisrael, of which the literal translation is General Organization of the Jewish Workers in Erets Israel (Palestine).

Achdut Haavoda (38 delegates), Hapoel Hatsair (27 delegates), and the Jewish Socialist Workers Party, Palestine's first Communist organization (6 delegates). In addition, there was a fourth group who called themselves Newcomers (16 delegates); most of these were members of Tseirei Tsion (Zionist Youth), an East European labor Zionist party which was close to Hapoel Hatsair.²

The Histadrut is today the largest and most influential organization in Israel. Its membership (including those in the armed forces) on November 1, 1949, was 241,794.³ Nearly half of all adult Jews in Israel were at that time in the Histadrut. At the seventh national convention May 24-30, 1949, 501 delegates were present, divided as follows: Mapai, 286; Mapam, 172; General Zionist Workers (Haoved Hatsioni), 19; Communists, 13*; and Religious Workers, 11.⁴ The General Council, which is elected by the convention on the basis of the proportional strength of the various parties, in turn chooses the executive committee. In each locality a Histadrut council and executive committee are similarly elected.

The Histadrut is both a federation of trade unions and a membership organization. That is, every trade union member is also directly a member of the Histadrut; he or she pays dues not to the union, but to the local Histadrut council, which distributes them to the individual unions on the basis of need. The Histadrut is the negotiator in labor disputes and has, in fact, the character of an all-embracing trade union. This is a product of the situation that existed in its early years when the working class numbered only several thousand, the differentiation of labor was still at an elementary stage, and few individual unions had yet been organized.

The composition of the Histadrut's membership is also unusual. In addition to wage-workers, it includes co-operative farmers (both those of the kibbutsim and the moshvei ovdim), farmers outside the co-operatives who do not hire labor, professional persons, and

*The Communists were not allowed to participate in the elections to the preceding convention in 1944. After their "legalization" in the Histadrut in 1946, they were granted one representative with a voice but no vote in the General Council, and one in each of the local councils of Tel Aviv, Haifa, and Jerusalem. At the 1949 convention nine Communists with full rights were elected to the General Council. The fifty-one-member executive committee chosen by the General Council includes one Communist. Communists have also been elected to various local councils.

workers' wives engaged in housekeeping. Thus, of the 241,794 Histadrut members at the beginning of November, 1949, 67,699—over one-fourth—consisted of workers' wives.⁵ Deducting another 15 per cent for farmers outside the kibbutsim and other self-employed persons, the working class membership is reduced to less than 60 per cent of the total. However, these constituted at the end of 1949 from two-thirds to three-fourths of all the workers of Israel. If we add those who are members of other labor federations, it becomes evident that the Jewish working class of Israel is the most highly organized in the capitalist world.

An integral part of the Histadrut is the General Council of Women Workers (Moetset Hapoalot), which includes both women workers and workers' wives. At its convention in the summer of 1949 it had more than 85,000 members.⁶ Another Histadrut affiliate is the Federation of Working Youth (Hanoar Haoved), whose membership on November 1, 1949 was 7,351.*

The Histadrut has played the major role in the field of social insurance. This was made necessary by the almost complete default of the British administration on its obligations in this sphere. The Histadrut's Sick Fund (Kupat Cholim), which was founded in 1912 by the Agricultural Workers' Union of Judea, is the largest medical institution in the country. It maintains a network of hospitals, sanatoria, clinics, etc. The social insurance setup also includes an Unemployment Fund, an Old Age Pension Fund, a Widows' and Orphans' Fund, and an Invalid Fund for disabled workers.† Nearly three-fourths of the Sick Fund has come directly from the workers, with private employers contributing about 15 per cent, and labor institutions and co-operatives another 10 per cent. All the other social insurance funds have been supported entirely by contributions from the workers.⁷‡

*Not included in the Histadrut membership figures.

†The Sick Fund and the Invalid Fund also serve members of the two trade union centers of religious workers; the members of the Histadrut's Arab section, the Palestine Labor League; and non-Histadrut workers employed in enterprises which conclude special agreements for this purpose.

‡These contributions are compulsory except for workers' wives engaged in housekeeping and for members of the youth federation. All other Histadrut members pay combined dues, graduated according to income, which include assessments for the various social insurance funds.

One would have thought that with the establishment of the Jewish state, its government would have lost no time in breaking with the Mandate tradition and assuming those obligations in regard to social security which many other capitalist governments have assumed. The provisional government did actually appoint a subcommittee to study Histadrut proposals for a compulsory insurance system to be financed jointly by the government, the employers, and the workers. But neither the government nor the leaders of the Histadrut appeared to be in a hurry about enacting social insurance legislation. More than a year and a half after the establishment of the Jewish state no such legislation had been introduced. And virtually no other labor protective measures had been passed.

The Histadrut also looms large in the field of education and culture. It operates a network of kindergartens, elementary and secondary schools in which 22 per cent of all the Jewish school children received their education in 1948.⁸ It also conducts vocational schools, teachers' training colleges, and adult classes. It issues the country's leading newspaper, *Davar*, as well as various weekly and monthly magazines, and it has its own book publishing company. The Ohel Workers' Theater affiliated to the Histadrut is one of Israel's foremost professional companies. The labor federation also sponsors amateur expression in music, the theater, dance, and art. Of course, most of this educational and cultural activity reflects the dominant Mapai ideology.

It is evident that the Histadrut is much more than a trade union center; trade unionism is in fact secondary to other interests. "The basic character of Histadrut," writes Gerhard Muenzner, "is that of a colonization company. . . ."⁹ As such it influences every aspect of the Yishuv's life. The subordination of trade union work to other activities is closely related to the fact that the Jewish labor movement has from the outset been imbued with a strongly nationalist rather than an internationalist outlook. And it has been suckled from birth on reformism—the doctrine that through gradual amelioration of the conditions of the workers, achieved through collaboration with the employers and their government, the fundamental evils of capitalist exploitation can be eradicated. In other countries reformism arose after the establishment of trade unions

and the considerable growth of industry; in Palestine it preceded both. It was planted among the workers by Russian labor Zionists who constituted an important part of the second wave of immigration from 1904 to 1914. Thus, the Histadrut, which should have been an arm of the workers in advancing their class interests, became, in the words of a report to the Joint Palestine Survey Commission,* "an arm of the Jewish Agency in Palestine."¹⁰

THE JEWISH WORKING CLASS

The evolution of the Palestine Jewish working class and its organizations has been shaped by six principal factors: the physically undeveloped and socially backward character of the country, Palestine's status as an imperialist colony, the decision to create a Jewish economy separate from the Arab economy, the petty-bourgeois social origin of the vast majority of the Jewish workers, the agrarian genesis of the labor movement, and the deep-dyed nationalist and reformist outlook of the labor leadership. This working class has evolved so recently that even today, despite the considerable advance of industry, it has not yet outlived its petty-bourgeois origins, which the influx of predominantly non-proletarian immigrants tends to renew. And the co-operative farmers continue to wield a large, and in some respects preponderant, influence in the trade union movement and the Zionist workers' parties.

However, contrary forces have also molded the Jewish working class. Those who sought to escape the class struggle only succeeded in planting it where it had been virtually non-existent before. And instead of a Jewish paradise where all men were brothers, there arose the same class divisions and exploitation as in other capitalist countries. With growing industrial development came strikes that increasingly shattered the harmony which the trade union leadership sought to establish with the employers. Though the Palestine government in 1942 banned strikes in war production, an exceptionally sharp rise in the strike curve took place during the war

*The Joint Palestine Survey Commission was set up in 1928 as a result of an agreement signed by Dr. Weizmann and Louis Marshall as the basis for the entrance of non-Zionist big business into the Jewish Agency. The commission, which employed a number of experts in various fields, consisted of Felix M. Warburg, Lord Melchett, Oscar Wasserman, a Berlin Jewish banker, and Dr. Lee K. Frankel of New York.

period as a result of the rapid expansion of industry and the inflationary ascent of living costs. In 1942 the number of man-days lost by Jewish workers through strikes and lockouts was more than sevenfold the figure for 1939. After dropping slightly in 1943 the number of man-days lost rose still higher the following year. It receded sharply in 1945, though remaining five times as high as in 1939. Wages and working conditions were the issues in all but an insignificant fraction of these wartime walkouts.¹¹

One of the most significant features of the war period were the first joint strikes of Jewish and Arab workers. At the same time chauvinist walkouts against the employment of Arabs virtually disappeared. In the postwar period these joint strikes reached an even higher level, the largest of them being directed at government enterprises and merging with the general struggle against British rule. In 1946 all Jewish and Arab post office workers struck and were soon joined by the junior clerks of other government departments, by the Arab and Jewish employees in the Public Works Department and on the government-owned railways. Major gains were achieved. The climax of this joint movement came in May, 1947, when 40,000 Arab and Jewish workers in government military camps and shops took part in the largest strike ever held in Palestine. It was a one-day walkout and was called after an unprecedented agreement between the Histadrut and the two Arab labor federations. These struggles marked a momentous break with the ingrown chauvinism and mutual distrust in which both Jewish and Arab workers had been reared, and revealed the possibility of extensive close co-operation between them.

The year 1946 saw the strike wave rise to a new peak, the number of man-days lost more than doubling the wartime high.* Nearly 40 per cent of this total was as a result of walkouts in enterprises employing mixed Jewish and Arab labor.¹² In 1947, though the strike movement receded, struggles involving mixed labor accounted for more man-days lost than those in exclusively Jewish establishments. At the same time strikes in enterprises employing

*Some idea of the relative magnitude of this strike movement may be gleaned from the fact that man-days lost averaged more than two per worker in the total working class. This was nearly as high as in the United States in the record post-war strike year of 1946.

only Arab labor surpassed in 1946-47 all previous records. In 1948, with the energies of the Yishuv absorbed by its war of liberation, the workers exercised patriotic self-discipline and despite the rapid rise in living costs, which was only partly compensated by wage increases, the strike movement declined to the level of the 'thirties.

With the end of hostilities, a new strike movement flared up. Wage increases were the chief demands.* Here is the strike picture for 1947, 1948, and the first three months of 1949:¹³

	Strikes			Strikers			Man-days lost		
	1947	1948	1949 (3 mos.)	1947	1948	1949 (3 mos.)	1947	1948	1949 (3 mos.)
Jewish labor ..	52	50 ^a	8	3,491	3,119	1,992	45,722	8,963	43,185
Arab labor	23			6,000 ^b			19,000 ^b		
Mixed labor ...	4			44,725			62,300		
Lockouts	2	2		93	22		3,971	132	
Total ..	81	52	8	54,309	3,141	1,992	130,993	9,095	43,185

*This includes a strike of 360 Haifa municipal workers, of whom 40 were Arabs.

^bApproximate.

The rising class struggle has also been reflected within the Histadrut by the emergence during the war and postwar years of a formidable Left opposition. This opposition is today represented by Mapam and the Communists, who together received 37 per cent of the total vote in the elections to the 1949 Histadrut convention.

The Jewish working class has also been powerfully molded in a positive sense by the national fight for independence, in which it was the driving force. This was closely related to the worldwide struggle against fascism, in which the Jewish people had so large a stake. That struggle and the Soviet Union's massive contribution to it and to the Yishuv's own thrust toward freedom also helped counter nationalist influences among the workers and quickened the spirit of internationalism, though the former remained dominant.

*Wages in Israel are low in terms of purchasing power, being closer to European rather than American standards. Average monthly earnings in industry in 1948 (including cost of living allowances, overtime, and other special payments) were £56 or \$168 at the rate of exchange prevailing at that time.¹⁴ In the same year average monthly earnings in manufacturing in the United States were \$234.43.¹⁵ However, the purchasing power of the Israeli income was about half that in the United States. And out of his wages the Israeli worker must pay for nearly all his social insurance coverage, for the high school education of his children, as well as income taxes that are greater in the lower and middle brackets than in the United States.

In 1945 the Histadrut sent delegates to the London and Paris conferences that established the World Federation of Trade Unions (W.F.T.U.), to which it affiliated. But three years later, when the leadership of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, the American Federation of Labor, and the British trade unions launched their attack on the W.F.T.U., the Histadrut's high command began to backtrack. At its 1949 convention the Histadrut voted, over the opposition of Mapam and the Communists, to send delegates to the forthcoming W.F.T.U. congress and observers to the one called by the pro-imperialist splitters of labor unity.¹⁶ It became evident that the Mapai majority among the Histadrut leadership were merely awaiting some convenient pretext to break with the W.F.T.U. without appearing to violate the spurious "neutrality" policy of their government.

ARAB LABOR

Because of the semi-feudal conditions in Palestine Arab society trade union organization developed late and was much weaker than in the Jewish community. As is typical among colonial peoples, the Arab working class has been largely semi-proletarian, with a high proportion of peasants who are only part-time urban workers. This increases the difficulty of creating stable labor organizations.

The beginnings of trade union activity among the Palestine Arabs date from the period immediately after World War I. It is significant that one of the first attempts was a joint organization of Jewish and Arab railwaymen, which became the Union of Railway, Post and Telegraph Workers. Founded in 1919 at the initiative of Jewish workers, it became part of the Histadrut.

The third Histadrut convention in 1927 resolved "to unite all the workers of Palestine regardless of religion, race or nationality, in one league for the purpose of improving their economic, social and cultural conditions."¹⁷ For this purpose a league of the workers of Palestine was to be established with autonomous Jewish and Arab sections. Thus the Histadrut decided not to follow the example, set by the railway workers, of joint Jewish-Arab unions but to promote separate Arab organization, linking the two groups through an over-all federation.

However, even this resolution was not carried out. The efforts

to organize Arab workers were perfunctory and carried on in a spirit of enlisting their co-operation in behalf of the nationalist and pro-imperialist policies of the Histadrut leadership. Moreover, the Histadrut's energetic kibbush avoda campaign, which sought to expel Arab labor from Jewish enterprises, was in such glaring contradiction to its professed desire to unite all workers that it is not surprising that the Arabs proved allergic to its half-hearted organizing efforts. In fact, Histadrut policies succeeded in disrupting the only union in which Jews and Arabs had been joined: in 1927, the very year in which the Histadrut resolved to set up a Jewish-Arab federation, most of the Arab railway workers withdrew from the mixed union and formed one of their own.

The over-all federation never materialized, and the name Palestine Labor League, which it was supposed to bear, came to be applied only to the Arab organization. This became an appendage of the Histadrut. In its report submitted to the World Trade Union Conference in London in 1945 the Histadrut stated that "the Arab organization is still in its infancy"—eighteen years after it was started—a condition which it blamed on "the backward and rather small Arab working classes" rather than its own backward policies.¹⁸ At the time of the proclamation of the Jewish state the Palestine Labor League claimed a membership of 5,000; its actual membership was considerably less.

The Arab workers of Palestine have, however, not contented themselves with favors from the Histadrut. They began independent organization in the 'twenties and in 1925 formed their first trade union federation, the Arab Workers' Society. It was under Right-wing nationalist leadership. In 1945 its membership was about 15,000, more than half being in Haifa. During World War II progressive influences within the Arab working class became sufficiently strong to launch in 1942 the Federation of Arab Trade Unions and Labor Societies, a Left-wing organization. It cooperated closely with the growing progressive opposition within the Arab Workers Society. In 1945 several branches of the Society, including those in Jaffa and Jerusalem, broke away and at a conference in August decided to join with the Federation of Arab Trade Unions in launching a new federation, the Arab Workers' Congress. The Palestine government's *A Survey of Palestine* states

that "the majority of organized Arab workers were represented at the conference" which founded the Arab Workers' Congress.¹⁹

The Arab Workers' Congress, as well as the Palestine Labor League and the Histadrut, participated in the London and Paris conferences that launched the W.F.T.U. All three were given representation on its General Council.

After the United Nations partition decision the Right-wing leaders of the Arab Workers' Society joined with the Mufti's gangs in the war against the Jews. On the other hand, the Arab Workers' Congress, led chiefly by Communists, supported the U.N. decision and actively opposed the Arab reactionaries. The flight of the Arabs temporarily disrupted its work and deprived it of most of its membership. But it soon reorganized its forces in Haifa and Nazareth and from these centers began extending its activity into other parts of Israel where an Arab population still remained. The Congress devoted its major attention to obtaining jobs and relief for the unemployed and to defending the rights of the Arab workers. Despite the obstruction it encountered from the Ben Gurion government and the Histadrut chiefs, it won sufficient influence to make it the principal organization in Nazareth, the largest Arab center in Israel. At the fourth convention of the Congress, held in Nazareth in April, 1949, eighteen local branches were represented.²⁰

After the establishment of Israel the Histadrut revived the Palestine Labor League and placed funds and organizers at its disposal. With the active help of the government the Histadrut sought to create an Arab trade union movement that would become an arm of Jewish nationalist and reformist policy within the Arab community. A writer in the official organ of the American Zionists aptly epitomized the contrast between the two Arab trade union centers when he stated that "objective observers" "hold that the [Arab Workers'] Congress is a movement of Arab workers, the Alliance [Palestine Labor League] for Arab workers."²¹

With the Arabs reduced to a small minority in Israel, the Histadrut declared it "accepted the principle of the equal right of the Arab worker to seek employment in Jewish economy"²²—an apparent reversal of the kibbush avoda policy. However, the Histadrut leaders contented themselves largely with verbal acceptance; they refused, for example, to protest the government's restric-

tions on the Arab population, which prevented workers from seeking employment in Jewish-owned establishments. And they made only half-hearted gestures toward ending wage differentials even where mixed labor was employed, as on the Jaffa dock.*

One new development has been the formation as part of the Palestine Labor League of the Union of Working Fellaheen in the State of Israel. The statement of its objectives did not, however, mention the waging of economic struggles, but placed chief emphasis on promoting co-operative marketing and purchasing and co-operative enterprises.²³ In the summer of 1949 this union sponsored the establishment of the first Arab kibbutz, called Uhuva (Brotherhood).

Despite the hostility of the Histadrut leadership, the Arab Workers' Congress, upholding the principle of working class unity, has addressed repeated appeals to the Histadrut urging the creation of a single Jewish-Arab trade union federation. It is clear that the separate organization of Jewish and Arab workers can no longer have even the specious justification of expressing two separate economies. For developments since the birth of Israel have been rapidly binding the country in a single economic framework even though there are still differences between its Jewish and Arab parts. The advance of industry, the sharpening of the class struggle, the lifting of nationalist prejudices from the minds of both Jewish and Arab workers as they confront common problems will break down artificial barriers and hasten the process of unification. Such unity is as necessary for the Jewish as for the Arab workers of Israel.

*In December, 1946, average daily wages of Arab industrial workers in Palestine were 34 per cent of the wages of Jewish workers; in transport Arab average daily wages were 54 per cent of Jewish wages.²⁴

XI. The World of Israel

The door of the inner room opened and a young man came out. He wore an open khaki shirt, khaki pants, and ankle puttees.

"That's Yigal," said the plump Palmach girl.

I walked over and handed him the note—the precious note signed with a name that carried authority. Col. Yigal Alon, commander-in-chief of the Palmach, smiled and held out his hand.

"I've been trying to get to you for weeks," I said. "I wanted to spend a little time with a Jewish general."

He smiled again. "Jewish, yes, but general?" He made a deprecatory gesture. Technically he was right. The highest rank in the Israeli army was colonel, except for the Chief of Staff, who was a brigadier. But an Israeli colonel had the responsibilities of a major-general or lieutenant-general in another army. This whole business of rank was very new and the Palmach, the mobile assault troops who were the flower of the army, didn't care much for it. Before this all the officers were simply called commanders, as they had been in the illegal Hagana days.

"Let's eat," Yigal said. Rank or no rank, everybody called him Yigal. It was after two of a hot mid-July day. I had been waiting three hours after hitchhiking from Tel Aviv on the rear seat of a courier's motorcycle to this former Arab village of Yazur where the Palmach staff had its headquarters. We went to the mess-hall where officers and men ate together. Obviously, this Yigal was no ordinary military man. Relaxed, informal, humorous, he acted more like the captain of the team than a member of the General Staff of the Defense Army of Israel. And he looked more like the kid from Genosar kibbutz in the Jordan Valley than the conqueror of eastern