



***The Issue of Zionism
in the Women's Movement***

Recently in the women's movement and the women's press there has been much discussion about anti-semitism. Women Against Imperialism is an organization of anti-imperialist white women, many of us Jewish. We are very disturbed at the growing tendency to use the issue of anti-semitism to justify Zionism and the colonization of the Palestinian people.

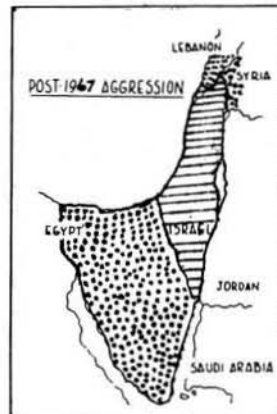
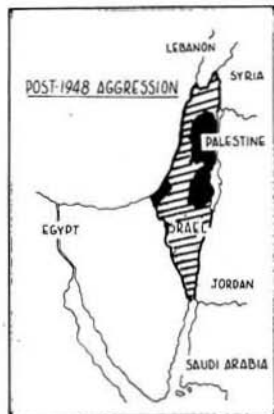
The Palestinian struggle is the leading force for revolution in the Middle East, galvanizing the struggles of oppressed Arab peoples throughout the region. The eyes of the whole world are focussed on the explosive confrontation between the Palestinian people and Israel in the West Bank, Gaza, and all of occupied Palestine. Yet at the same time, Zionism is gaining more and more legitimacy in the US women's movement and white left.

Anti-semitism has a long and ugly history, and today it is growing along with the rise of the right. During the 1940s, genocide was committed against six million Jews. As European fascism systematically carried out one of the worst crimes in history, most of the world watched, silent and inactive. These facts are abhorrent and very real. However, from these experiences, many people are drawing conclusions that are wrong and dangerous. More and more people are saying that Zionism is the so-called "national liberation movement of the Jewish people." At the same time, there is a growing tendency to say that Jewish women in America are part of an oppressed nationality, whose situation can be equated with that of Black, Puerto Rican, ChicanoMexicano and Native American peoples. We want to argue against these views because we think the women's movement must take a stand in solidarity with the Palestinian revolution and with the national liberation struggles of colonized Third World peoples inside the United States.

OPPOSE ZIONISM: SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINE!

Progressive Jewish women and the women's movement as a whole must take a stand on the question of Palestine and Israel, without allowing charges of anti-semitism to cloud our view of what Zionism is really about. We can't cop out by saying it's just too confusing.

Former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir articulated a fundamental tenet of Zionism when she stated in 1969: "It is not as though there was a Palestinian people and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them. They did not exist." Behind this chilling lie is the reality that "Israel" was carved in blood from the homeland of the Palestinian people. Before the Zionist invasion, Palestine had a population of a half a million people. Moslems, Christians, and 20,000 Jews lived together in an atmosphere of religious tolerance, building an Arab culture and society over thousands of years.



The Zionist leader Herzl commented that if the Zionist movement was to receive British support, it must show the British government "a spot in the English possessions where there were no white people as yet." Uganda, Argentina, and Palestine were all seriously considered as possible sites for the Zionist settlement. British Zionist Lord Melcher argued the reasons why Britain should support the colonization of Palestine:

"The advantages to the British Empire are obvious. The Suez canal and air stations, the oil-pipe outlet in Haifa and its harbor, have become vital to our naval strategy in the Mediterranean. *The security of the imperial complex of interests can be better assured by a large European population than by the few battalions that can be spared.*" (emphasis added)

The Zionist and British usurpation of land and power was accomplished through terror and genocide. In 1948 alone 385 Palestinian villages were destroyed and their names erased from the map. Over the years 1 and 1/2 million people were displaced at gunpoint. By the hundreds of thousands, Palestinians were forced to flee into the desert, living for decades in tent villages while the settlers took over their farms and groves.

At every step, the Palestinian people resisted being driven from their homeland. Since the Zionist invasion, there have been six major revolts and scores of popular uprisings; 30,000 martyrs have died in the process. This is the reality behind the Zionist myth that the colonization of Palestine has "made the desert bloom."

The Zionist state of Israel could not exist without the backing of US imperialism, which has built Israel into an outpost of white supremacy. 20% of the US foreign aid budget goes to the Zionists; in turn Israel operates as the policeman of imperialist interests in the Middle East. Just as South Africa

invades Angola, Namibia and Mozambique to enforce imperialist domination of Southern Africa, so Israel bombs Lebanon, Iraq and annexes Syrian land with impunity. Like the white settlers in South Africa, the Jewish settlers in Israel provide the manpower and political base for white supremacist aggression.

On a world scale, Israel actively supports other fascist regimes and military dictatorships. Israel is a major supplier of military aid to South Africa and the repressive regimes in El Salvador and Guatemala. It supported Somoza in Nicaragua, the puppet government in South Viet Nam, and now Pinochet's rule in Chile. Fascist South Africa and Israel are each other's number one trading partners. This situation cannot be brushed off by blaming the right wing policies of Israeli Prime Minister Begin. It is not the particular administration that is in question, but the basic nature of the Zionist white settler state. From the very beginning, Israel's takeover of Arab land has depended on aggression, the threat of aggression, and on serving the interests of US imperialism.

The goal of Palestinian revolutionaries is not simply to decolonize the country, but to carry out a total social transformation. One of the fundamental goals of the struggle is the liberation of women. "While the war of liberation rages, the foundation of the new society is being laid and the process of eliminating all forms of oppression begins--a process in which women must play a crucial and equal role" (Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine). There is



Palestinian youth accused of throwing rocks during a recent uprising in Nablus is clubbed by an Israeli soldier.



a long history of Palestinian women confronting traditional male supremacist limitations to fight for the liberation of their people--a history that has been hidden by racist propaganda which portrays Palestinian culture as totally static and backward.

The goals of independence and socialism can only be accomplished through people's war--the mobilization of young and old, women and men, to defeat a militarily superior enemy. The development of the Palestinian people's war creates a revolutionary dynamic throughout the region. Palestine's liberation will threaten the oil lifeline of US and European imperialism. The defeat of Zionist Israel will destroy one of imperialism's most important bastions of white supremacy. Palestine is a decisive battleground in the world struggle between the forces of national liberation and socialism against a declining vicious empire--which is why Palestine is a focus of constant attack. The war machine that rains death on the Palestinian people is headquartered here in the US; so is the imperialist and Zionist propaganda apparatus that portrays the Palestinian people as a nation of terrorists. This situation demands our active solidarity!

Many Jewish women and other people in the white left hold the view that Zionism can be humanized, that "the Israelis and Palestinians just need to work out their problems." This view wipes out the fact that the Palestinians have the only legitimate claim to the land and that the Zionists took the land at gunpoint. The only basis for peace in the Middle East is the PLO's goal of a

democratic secular Palestinian state "where Jews and Arabs can live in peace." It is the height of white supremacy to use the holocaust to claim Palestine for the Jews. *Who bears the responsibility for genocide against Jewish people is not the Arab people of Palestine, but European fascism and imperialism.* And it is only in the revolutionary struggle against fascism and US-led imperialism that anti-semitism and all other forms of oppression will be destroyed forever.

GENOCIDE IN AMERICA

There is a growing tendency in the women's movement to say that Jewish women are "Third World" or at least not white. It's argued that Jewish women should meet the threat of genocide by building coalitions on an equal footing with other victims of racism in America. This view ignores the fact that Jewish people in America, despite anti-semitism, are part of a white supremacist social order that holds down Black, ChicanoMexicano, Native American and Puerto Rican peoples. For Jews and for all of us who know that genocide is not just a word, it is critical to recognize that it is these colonized Third World peoples--not Jews--who face genocide in the US here and now.

The US, like South Africa and Israel, is a white settler colony. The foundation of the US' world empire was its ability to consolidate a vast and rich home base by forcibly incorporating the land, labor and resources of Mexican, Black, and Native American peoples. From the beginning, Third World peoples have been subjected to a system of laws, police, prisons, education, health, and white supremacist terror designed to ensure privileges for all white people. This is why bitterly poor and oppressed white people from all over the world--Jews, Italians, Irish, Poles--could come to America and "make it" within two or three generations, while Black and other colonized people who have been here for hundreds of years are held perpetually at the very bottom.

Today Third World peoples are forced to bear the brunt of the political and economic crisis of a declining US empire. For example, Black, Latino, and Native American people are being stripped of jobs and social services, which translates into astronomical rates of unemployment and infant mortality. This white supremacist strategy of the US government is being enthusiastically supported by large sectors of the white population, which is why we see mass reactionary movements around issues like tax revolts, crime, and the death penalty. When colonized people resist, the police, the Klan, and the law and order movement are there to keep them in "their place." This is why Third World people are being put in concentration camps (prisons); why revolutionary leaders of the Puerto Rican, ChicanoMexicano, and Black liberation movements are being interned through Grand Juries; why over 2,000 Third World people were murdered by the police in the last five years; why Black peoples' homes are shot into and their children murdered by the Klan. The goal is to



September 1978, 3,000 Black people march on New York City Hall.

contain the development of national liberation movements struggling for independence, socialism, and human rights--the strategy is genocide.

America's general shift to the right is also showing up in the Jewish community, despite a tradition of leftism. The heavy influence of Zionism meant that 45% of the Jewish vote went to arch-reactionary Ronald Reagan. This would have been unthinkable 20 years ago; it shows the reactionary directions that develop when people begin to look to imperialism for protection. Thousands of Jews are joining anti-bussing organizations like BUS-STOP; on the far right, the Jewish Defense League is patrolling Jewish neighborhoods against Black youth with guard dogs and guns. Progressive white Jews in the US who oppose these developments can take our place in the struggle for liberation not by pretending we are Third World people, but by taking an active stand against white supremacy.

Equating anti-semitism with the oppression of colonized people lets white women evade our responsibility to oppose white supremacy. Look at the

number of conferences, meetings, and articles focussed on anti-semitism compared to what the women's movement has done on the issues of killer cops, the Klan or support for Black and Puerto Rican freedom fighters. More and more women are saying, "We can't make other people's issues our priority. We're under attack, and we have to focus on our own issues now." If white women in South Africa said that they couldn't make a priority out of support for Black liberation, the blatant racism of this statement would be easy to see. The same is true for us: if we recognize that as white women we are part of a nation that is colonizing people in the US and around the world, then how can we say it's not our responsibility to act? This is NOT a guilt trip--it is confronting the reality of who we are and what it means to live in the headquarters of the most powerful and brutal empire the world has ever known. To ally with national liberation is not to deny concerns about anti-semitism or backburner our struggle against women's oppression. It means uniting with the national liberation struggles from Zimbabwe to Puerto Rico that are leading and winning the fight to destroy this system and all forms of oppression.

We as women do not confront some separate structure of oppression, but the same imperialist system whose bedrock is the oppression of colonized nations inside the US and around the world. We know that women will never be liberated within a system that thrives on our degraded and exploited position. We can learn from the Palestinian and other liberation movements that we do not need to accommodate ourselves to this system--imperialism can be confronted and defeated. It is in this struggle that the new woman is born. If we want to be part of building a society where colonialism, women's oppression, anti-semitism and class exploitation can no longer exist, then we need to actively side with Palestinian, Black, ChicanoMexicano, Puerto Rican, Native American and all national liberation struggles which are leading the fight to take this empire apart.

Women Against Imperialism, April 1982

To find out about the work of Women Against Imperialism, please contact us at: 3543 18th St., Box 14, San Francisco, CA 94110 (415) 561-9040; or P.O. Box 60542, Los Angeles, CA 90060.

For a list of further readings about Palestine and Zionism, send 50¢ to Women Against Imperialism at the San Francisco address. We especially recommend the Bulletin of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, available from PFLP International Relations Committee, P.O. Box 14/5024, Cornish Al-Mazraah, Beirut, Lebanon for \$12 per year.