

# Land, Labor and the Logic of Zionism: A Critical Engagement with Gershon Shafir

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*From roughly the 1930s into the 1970s, labor-Zionist ideology, parties and institutions played a central role in the Zionist movement in Palestine, and then from 1948 in the State of Israel, manifesting one crucial way in which the Zionist project differed from other comparable settler colonial enterprises. Gershon Shafir's 1989 book Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882-1914 argued forcefully that it was labor Zionism's encounter with the land and labor markets in late-Ottoman Palestine, rather than abstract ideology, that led it to adopt a strategy based on the exclusion of indigenous Arab labor and economic separatism. This trajectory, he argued, also ultimately conduced to most Zionists' acceptance of territorial compromise in 1948. Shafir thereby offered a powerful alternative to idealist and romanticised approaches to early Zionism in Palestine. However, using as a foil a comparison that a leading labor-Zionist thinker drew in the late 1920s between the Jews of Palestine and the white minority in South Africa, it is possible to see what Shafir's prioritisation of labor Zionists' adaptation to local conditions in Palestine and his depiction of the pre-1914 period as crucially formative for Zionist/Israeli history elides, particularly the central role of coercion and state violence (by the Zionist movement and Israel but also by the British colonial state and, later, the United States) in making possible the attainment and perpetuation of a Jewish state that now dominates all of Palestine and continues to subordinate the indigenous population. From this perspective, the period of labor-Zionist 'moderation' can be seen not as the norm from which post-1967 Israel has regrettably departed, but as one phase in a longer history frequently characterised by a logic of dispossession, expansion and domination.*

While the Zionist project in Palestine has had significant features in common with other settler-colonial enterprises of the modern era, it has also had specific characteristics that set it apart.<sup>1</sup> One of Zionism's distinctive features is that for nearly half a century – from the early 1930s until the later 1970s – the leadership and many key

institutions of the Jewish community in Palestine (known in Hebrew as the *Yishuv*), and from 1948 of Israel, the state that Zionism brought into being, were dominated by a sociopolitical movement that defined itself as not merely Zionist but also as, in some sense, socialist. This diverse and often internally-conflicted movement, to which I will refer here as 'labor Zionist', regarded the Jewish working class and labor movement in Palestine as the vanguard of the Zionist project of immigration, settlement and state-building, and at the zenith of its power it exercised hegemony through a dense web of political, economic, social and cultural institutions that powerfully shaped many domains of Jewish life in pre-state Palestine and then in Israel. Labor Zionism's dominance began to erode in the 1970s, and in the decades that followed the 1977 electoral victory of the Zionist right the bases of its once-vaunted power gradually disintegrated or were dismantled. As a consequence Israel's Labor Party, and the other parties of the Zionist left and their affiliated institutions, have in recent years become increasingly marginal in Israeli-Jewish political, social and cultural life.

The central role played by the labor-Zionist movement for such a lengthy historical period has understandably received a great deal of scholarly attention.<sup>2</sup> Here I engage critically with what I regard as the most innovative and interesting scholarly analysis of the role of labor Zionism in shaping the Zionist project at its inception, using as a foil an essay – largely ignored by scholars – published in the late 1920s by a leading labor-Zionist thinker and leader in which he explored the lessons that the 'color bar' in South Africa might offer for labor Zionism in Palestine. My purpose in so doing is to highlight more fully some of the factors and dynamics that helped give the Zionist project its specific character and distinguish it from similar enterprises elsewhere, but also to better understand what it has in common with them, particularly with respect to the ways in which, in Palestine as elsewhere, coercion, violence and state action governed the relationship between the settler or dominant-minority population on the one hand and the indigenous population on the other.

## **DEMYTHOLOGISING EARLY ZIONISM IN PALESTINE**

In his 1989 book *Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882-1914*, sociologist Gershon Shafir powerfully challenged

the longstanding assumption of mainstream (largely Zionist) scholars of early Zionism that the key social, economic and political features of the Yishuv, and then of Israel in its first two or three decades, could best be explained in terms of the ideas and values which many of the Jews who settled in Palestine in the 'Second Aliya' period (1904-1914) brought with them from Eastern Europe.<sup>3</sup> For example, much of the conventional scholarly (and Israeli popular) literature posited that the creation of the *kibbutz* and other forms of collective or cooperative enterprise, the sociopolitical power of the labor-Zionist movement, and the welfare-state institutions and policies that characterised Israel in its early decades all stemmed from the socialist values that these (much mythologised) Second Aliya 'pioneers' (*halutzim*) acquired in Europe and then sought to realise in Palestine.<sup>4</sup>

Instead, Shafir drew on the historical-sociology tradition exemplified by Barrington Moore and a typology of forms of European overseas settlement derived from the work of D.K. Fieldhouse and George Frederickson to produce a much more materialist analysis of the evolution of the early Zionist project.<sup>5</sup> Shafir's study foregrounded not the ideas and visions that these Second Aliya immigrants had in their heads when they got off the boat from Europe but the character and consequences of their interactions with conditions on the ground in Palestine itself. His central focus was the responses that they eventually worked out, through a protracted process of trial and error, to the adverse socioeconomic environment that they encountered there, especially the local markets for land and labor, after the vision of proletarianisation and class struggle that this cohort of Zionists arrived with proved unworkable in the context of Palestine.

Shafir offered an empirically rich, historically well-grounded and analytically sophisticated account of how by 1914 the early labor-Zionist movement in Palestine had developed viable solutions to the two key dilemmas faced by its members (and by the Zionist settlement project they sought to lead and shape). First, after the failure of efforts to secure viable employment for these newcomers as agricultural wage-workers on Jewish-owned farms, owing to the high wages they required and limited job opportunities, a new form of collective agricultural settlement (the *kibbutz*) was invented that

(with financial and technical support from the largely bourgeois-led Zionist Organization) could more cost-effectively absorb and maintain new immigrants and advance Jewish settlement on the land. Second, in this same period the nascent labor-Zionist movement abandoned (after much debate and dissension) key aspects of its initial ideology and embraced the twin doctrines of the 'conquest of labor' (*kibbush ha'avoda*) and 'Hebrew labor' (*'avoda ivrit*). These doctrines envisioned not merely the transformation of (largely lower middle-class) Jewish immigrants to Palestine into proper (preferably agrarian) worker-pioneers through physical labor in the national cause, but also the creation of a secure Jewish working class in Palestine through the maximal exclusion of less-expensive indigenous Arab labor from employment in all segments of the Jewish sector of the local economy. This would create or preserve employment opportunities in Palestine for current and future Jewish immigrants, without which the Zionist settlement project was likely to founder.

By 1914 labor Zionism has thus adopted a strategy of socioeconomic development based on economic separatism and the exclusion of Arab labor whose long-term goal was the gradual development (massively subsidised by the international Zionist movement) of a separate, high-wage, exclusively Jewish economy in Palestine; this in turn would make possible the eventual creation of a viable Jewish state.<sup>6</sup> Drawing on the Fieldhouse-Frederickson typology of forms of European settlement, Shafir characterised this model as the 'separatist method of pure settlement', in that it sought the creation of a homogenous, autonomous settler society that did not significantly depend on – indeed, that sought to exclude – indigenous labor.<sup>7</sup> Shafir argued that the adoption of this path by 1914 had enormous consequences for the future trajectory of Zionism in Palestine: it decisively shaped crucial aspects of Jewish society in Palestine (and then of Israel in its first decades), laid the basis for labor Zionism's eventual sociopolitical hegemony, and even underpinned that movement's willingness in 1947-49 to accept a Jewish state in only part of Palestine – as opposed to the Zionist right, which rejected partition and demanded a Jewish state in all of Palestine.

*Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* is without doubt a landmark book, a pathbreaking work of historical-sociological analysis which effectively demolished much of the romanticisation and mythmaking that had long infused study of the Second Aliya period, especially (but by no means exclusively) among Israeli scholars. Beyond providing the most careful and detailed study yet produced of this period, it also offered a highly productive way of situating Zionism within a typology of settler-colonial projects; as such it constituted an enormous contribution to the scholarly literature on Zionism.

Notwithstanding its many virtues, however, there are aspects of Shafir's argument with which one can usefully take issue. For example, I have elsewhere noted that while Shafir's focus on the land and labor markets enabled him to very effectively undermine idealist, voluntarist and essentialist approaches to early Zionist history, the (perhaps overly economic) mode of analysis that he deployed tends to treat ideology, culture and politics as marginal, which means that some very important things get left out of the story.<sup>8</sup> It is also the case that labor-Zionist strategy and institutions continued to evolve through the 1920s and into the 1930s; for example, it was only in the 1920s that the kibbutz, whose prewar antecedents Shafir so masterfully reconstructed and which he (arguably) characterised as 'the real nucleus of Israeli state formation' (p. 184), really acquired the organisational form, and the political, economic and social significance, that it would retain over the following half-century or so. And it was only in the early 1930s that labor Zionism secured its preeminent position among the array of sociopolitical forces contending for leadership of the Yishuv and the Zionist movement. It therefore seems reasonable to ask whether these and other developments were as inevitable, or as foreordained by pre-1914 developments, as Shafir's portrayal might suggest.

To put the issue more broadly: Shafir's periodisation, his insistence that the basic contours of the Zionist settlement project were decisively formed in the 1904-1914 period as a result of its early adoption of the pure settlement model, can be taken to imply that all that followed was essentially the unfolding of a logic, or of a coherent set of dynamics or processes, produced by the constraints and choices of the pre-1914 period. This approach may hinder our

ability to see the historical development of the Yishuv as having been shaped by a broad (and often quite contingent) range of factors all along the way, right down to 1948. More critically, it may also obscure the roles which coercion, state intervention and violence played in facilitating the realisation of the labor-Zionist strategy that Shafir identified as central to the formation of Israeli state and society.

## **LABOR ZIONISM AND THE QUESTION OF 'JOINT ORGANISATION'**

To address these issues, I would like to begin by calling attention to a passage in the preface to the first edition of Shafir's book in which he briefly alluded to how and why he thought Zionism's historical trajectory had diverged from that of South Africa:

While starting out with the maximalist aim of Jewish territorial supremacy in Palestine, under the un auspicious [*sic*] circumstances for colonization in both land and labor markets in this part of the Ottoman Empire, the aims of the Zionist mainstream were transformed. Failing to attract the masses of the Jewish people and remaining dependent on massive outside financial subsidy, the Israeli labor movement perforce limited its ambition and condoned a course that potentially diverted it from the South African path: it sought a bifurcated model of economic development leading to territorial partition. This strategy, though it originated not in the appreciation of Palestinian national aspirations but in the inescapable facts of Palestinian demography, was expected by the labor movement to go a long way toward the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and subsequently became the legacy of its, and simultaneously the [Zionist Organization's], mainstream. Consequently, the [post-1967] gradual abandonment of partition plans, with their accompanying vision of an Israeli and an Arab state side by side in Eretz Israel/Palestine, in favor of

returning to earlier dreams of Israeli territorial maximalism, with all its deplorable results, would signal the final superseding and/or the transformation of the labor movement.<sup>9</sup>

Comparison of the Zionist project's historical trajectory with that of twentieth-century South Africa has subjected many of those who have ventured it to politically-motivated abuse, but from a scholarly standpoint there can be no serious objection to such comparative analysis. Indeed, even Zionists sometimes found such comparisons useful, and here I will delve into one such instance: an essay by a prominent labor-Zionist leader published in the late 1920s in which he explicitly compared the situation of the Jews in Palestine with that of the white minority in South Africa. Discussion of this essay may help elucidate some of the limitations of Shafir's approach and enable us to approach a fuller understanding of the specificities of Zionism.

The essay's author was Hayyim Arlosoroff, born in 1899 to a middle-class family in the town of Romny, in Russian-ruled Ukraine; in 1905 his family fled to Germany to escape the wave of antisemitic pogroms fostered by the Tsarist regime to counter that year's revolutionary upsurge.<sup>10</sup> Arlosoroff studied economics at the University of Berlin, writing his doctoral thesis (a critical analysis of Marx's concept of class struggle) under the direction of Werner Sombart. By that time he had become a Zionist, indeed one of the leaders in Germany of the *Hapo'el Hatzza'ir* (Young Worker) labor-Zionist party, a social-democratic (but explicitly non-Marxist) tendency which insisted that Jews settling in Palestine should transform themselves into a (primarily agricultural) working class which would serve as the vanguard of the national redemption of the Jewish people.

Arlosoroff emigrated to Palestine in 1924. Something of a *wunderkind* and equipped with German university training in economics – a rarity among labor-Zionist leaders in Palestine, most of whom never got beyond small-town secondary schools in Tsarist Russia and were much better at polemics in the not always very subtle Russian social-democratic tradition than at quasi-academic analysis – rose quickly to become an important figure not only in his

own party but in the broader Zionist movement as well. He won particular attention for his analyses of Zionist economic and financial issues, which advanced powerful rationales for the policies that the labor-Zionist movement was urging on the international Zionist movement as a whole at a time when the latter was still dominated (especially outside Palestine) by non- or even anti-socialist 'General Zionists'. In these years both General Zionists and labor Zionists also had to confront a challenge from the new 'Revisionist' faction within the international Zionist movement. The Revisionists were disdainful of the movement's prioritisation of the slow work of immigration and settlement; they demanded that Zionism instead orient itself toward securing control of all of Palestine (including what is today Jordan) at the earliest possible moment by whatever means necessary, even if that meant clashing with not only the country's Arab majority but also Britain, which had conquered Palestine during the First World War and had since the Balfour Declaration of 1917 been formally committed to protecting and fostering the Zionist project.<sup>11</sup>

As the summer of 1927 approached, Hayyim Arlosoroff was busy in Tel Aviv – founded less than two decades earlier as the first exclusively Jewish city in Palestine – drafting an essay that would constitute the core of his intervention in what he saw as a crucial debate about the labor-Zionist movement's policy regarding relations with Arab workers in Palestine. This issue was high on the agenda of the upcoming third congress of the General Organization of Hebrew Workers in the Land of Israel, better known as the Histadrut (Hebrew for 'organisation').<sup>12</sup> Founded in 1920, the Histadrut sought to organise all the Jewish workers in Palestine and mobilise them to carry out the crucial Zionist tasks of immigration, settlement and economic development. With some 25,000 members and a growing network of economic enterprises and social and cultural institutions, the Histadrut had by the later 1920s become the chief vehicle through which the two main labor-Zionist parties – Arlosoroff's *Hapo'el Hatza'ir* and the larger *Ahdut Ha'avoda* (Unity of Labor, led by Histadrut secretary David Ben-Gurion) – sought to build their political, social and economic base and bid for (and eventually win) hegemony in the Yishuv and the Zionist movement.

The Histadrut was firmly committed to the principles of Hebrew labor and the conquest of labor, which as I noted earlier had



been defined (or redefined) in the Second Aliya period to mean the achievement of exclusively Jewish employment in every Jewish-owned enterprise in Palestine, as well as maximal Jewish employment in the public sector. Most labor Zionists had come to believe that only these policies could ensure that enough jobs would be created or secured in Palestine for Jews used to a European standard of living but now in competition with an abundant supply of much cheaper (and almost entirely unorganised) Arab labor. They were also seen as an essential prerequisite for the creation of a Jewish economy in Palestine that would be as self-sufficient, and as disconnected from the Arab economy, as possible.

Notwithstanding the Histadrut's firm embrace of the principle of Hebrew labor, which it sought to implement in the face of strong (and often successful) resistance by some Jewish employers (especially citrus plantation owners and building contractors) who insisted on employing much cheaper and less troublesome Arab workers, that organisation and the two labor-Zionist parties which dominated it had since the early 1920s been grappling with the question of their policy toward Palestine's nascent Arab working class, elements of which were beginning to organise themselves. The issue confronting the Histadrut was often framed as the question of 'joint organisation': keeping in mind the priority of the struggle for Hebrew labor, in what organisational form or framework should Jews employed in 'mixed' (usually meaning government-owned) enterprises, especially the Palestine Railways, cooperate or even unite with Arab workers in pursuit of their common economic interests? And more broadly, how should the Histadrut, as the central institution of the labor-Zionist movement with both a 'national' (i.e. Zionist) and a (Jewish) working-class mission, relate to the few existing Palestinian Arab trade unions or to some future Arab labor movement?

In considering these questions, labor-Zionist leaders were of course keenly aware of widespread Palestinian Arab opposition to Zionism, though they vehemently rejected the legitimacy and authenticity of Palestinian Arab nationalism, denied that it had any popular or mass base, and insisted (in public, at least) that it was merely an instrument of a small elite of wealthy Arab landlords and Muslim religious fanatics who saw in the progress, development and

enlightenment which Zionism was bringing to Palestine a threat to their ability to dominate and exploit the Arab peasants and workers. In 1924 Ben-Gurion had gone so far as to argue that the fate of the Jewish worker in Palestine (and thus of the Zionist project) was inextricably linked to the fate of the Arab worker. He declared that while there was no basis for any compromise or agreement between the Zionist movement and the Palestinian Arab ruling class or nationalist leadership, there was a potential basis for understanding and cooperation between Arab and Jewish workers which would at the same time serve the long-term aims of Zionism, and particularly of labor Zionism. By representing the nascent Arab working class as Zionism's potential ally, Ben-Gurion could overcome the apparent contradiction between his unwavering commitment to a Jewish majority and (ultimately) a Jewish state in Palestine, on the one hand, and, on the other, his formal commitment to democracy at a moment when the question of an elected legislative council for Palestine representing both Arabs and Jews was being hotly debated.<sup>13</sup>

In the debate that preceded the Histadrut's third congress, which was to convene in July 1927, Ben-Gurion continued to argue for some form of alliance between Jewish and Arab workers as a way to overcome the problems which the Jewish working class faced in Palestine, especially competition from much cheaper Arab labor. He and his party comrades in Ahdut Ha'avoda insisted that the Histadrut must remain an exclusively Jewish and Zionist organisation and continue to fight for Hebrew labor; but they also hoped that, by helping to organise and win higher wages for Arab workers employed by fellow Arabs or by the government of Palestine, the Histadrut might ease the competitive pressure which abundant cheap Arab labor exerted on the jobs and wages of Jewish workers.

Meanwhile, a small but vocal faction on the left end of the labor-Zionist spectrum was demanding that the Histadrut's explicitly Zionist functions be transferred to some other body and that the organisation admit Arab workers and transform itself into an instrument of Arab-Jewish class struggle. As they saw it, the inexorable process of capitalist development in Palestine, leading to the growth and organisation of the Arab working class and the Arab workers' attainment of higher wages, would in the not too distant

future eliminate the threat which cheap, unorganised Arab labor posed to organised but expensive Jewish labor in Palestine. For its adherents this prognosis happily and neatly eliminated any contradiction between their avowed commitment to proletarian internationalism and the class struggle, on the one hand, and on the other their fervent Zionism.<sup>14</sup>

## **ARLOSOROFF ON JEWISH AND ARAB LABOR**

Hayyim Arlosoroff attacked both of these positions in his 1927 essay *On the Question of Joint Organization*.<sup>15</sup> Implicitly invoking his credentials as an academically trained economist and his reputation as a hard-headed and objective social analyst, he demanded that

all the parties and currents of the Hebrew socialist movement in Eretz Yisra'el [the Land of Israel, the Hebrew term for Palestine] must see the facts as they are without forcing them into a procrustean bed of preconceived doctrines. Nor may that movement or its leaders refrain from drawing conclusions which bear on the essential tasks of the Hebrew worker in this country even if those conclusions clearly contradict accepted formulas.

For Arlosoroff, the question of relations between Jewish and Arab labor was among the most fundamental issues confronting the Zionist project. It had, as he saw it, two aspects. First, 'the Hebrew worker with a European standard of needs encounters at every step his primitive competitor from the neighboring people whose needs are only slightly greater than zero'. The great difference in wages that each earned stemmed from the 'vast cultural, economic and social difference which separates the two nations in Eretz Yisra'el from one another'. Second, the expensive Jewish worker was in Palestine not a native-born worker embedded in a normal national economy; he [*sic*, in Arlosoroff's usage] was an immigrant but also a pioneer, whose struggle for employment was part of Zionism's struggle for immigration and settlement. Hence it was all the more impossible to

avoid clashes stemming from competition between Arab and Jewish workers.

To resolve this dilemma, some were proposing that the Histadrut commit itself fully to joint organisation, from a conviction that joint Arab-Jewish trade union work could eliminate (or at least ameliorate) the problem of competition while also paving the way for maximal or exclusive Jewish employment in the Jewish sector of Palestine's economy. Arlosoroff insisted that such a course might in fact undermine the economic and social basis of the Yishuv and exacerbate political tensions with the Arabs. Hence the need for an objective examination of whether joint organisation in whatever form could really eliminate 'the conflicts stemming from competition between modern, expensive Hebrew labor and primitive, cheap Arab labor and create for the Hebrew workers more favorable conditions in which to wage their struggle for the conquest of labor and settlement'. This in turn required a dynamic analysis of economic and social relations between Jews and Arabs in Palestine that would investigate the impact of Jewish immigration and settlement on Arab society and economy in Palestine, but also the ways in which the Yishuv was affected by the Arab economy.

Arlosoroff noted that in discussing joint organisation Ben-Gurion and others had advanced the slogan 'Arab labor in the Arab sector, Jewish labor in the Jewish sector, mixed labor in the mixed (government) sector'. Ben-Gurion insisted that when the Jewish workers excluded cheap Arab labor from employment in the Jewish sector they were not really discriminating against Arabs on a national basis; they were merely defending themselves as organised workers from the threat posed by unorganised cheap labor. Arlosoroff mocked Ben-Gurion's approach and rhetoric:

The Arab worker who finds himself suddenly expelled from the boundaries of Hebrew settlement they console with this, that this treatment is not the result of his being an Arab but of his being an unorganised and cheap worker. And they also explain to him that 'this struggle in its historical tendency is also a struggle to raise the material standard and social level of the Arab worker living in Eretz Yisra'el'...there is no question here of 'basic national contradictions'.

Arab workers expelled from their jobs were, Arlosoroff suggested, unlikely to be convinced or consoled by such slogans.

But Arlosoroff found Ben-Gurion's approach faulty and fanciful in other ways as well. For example: would Jews really refuse employment in the Arab sector if the opportunity arose? In fact, Jewish workers had already moved into the Arab sector and displaced Arabs, for example the transport of citrus from the groves to the port of Jaffa, which had for decades been a monopoly of Arab camel drivers and which work Jews now performed using trucks. More broadly, the Jewish and Arab economies in Palestine were not hermetically sealed off from one another; indeed, the boundaries between them were porous. Manufactured goods produced in Jewish enterprises by Hebrew labor were sold in the Arab market, while Arab products and produce entered the Jewish economy, illustrating how the two were interlinked.

But for Arlosoroff the real issue was cheap Arab labor, which posed a constant threat to expensive Jewish labor. There was a virtually unlimited supply of cheap Arab labor, from within Palestine but also from neighboring countries, and this reality meant unceasing pressure on Jewish jobs and wages. All this rendered Ben-Gurion's insistence that there was no fundamental national contradiction between Arab and Jewish workers absurd, as was any approach to the question of joint organisation that did not take this elementary economic fact into account. Those on the left who believed that joint organisation could bring about the equalisation of wages between Arab and Jewish workers were simply ignoring the fact that Palestine was a poor, low-wage country situated in a poor, backward, low-wage region. Joint organisation would more likely result in the displacement of Jewish workers by Arabs, leading the former to leave Palestine and bringing about the collapse of the Zionist enterprise. What actually kept the Jewish settlement economy afloat and Jewish wages high, Arlosoroff argued, was capital imports, i.e. the capital invested in Palestine by Jewish immigrants and investors but even more importantly the 'national capital' raised by the institutions of the Zionist Organization and channeled to Palestine for Jewish settlement and economic development.

## COMPARING PALESTINE AND SOUTH AFRICA

To bolster his arguments against the visions of joint organisation advanced both by Ben-Gurion and by his opponents on the far left end of the Zionist spectrum, and to illustrate the challenge facing by the labor-Zionist movement in Palestine, Arlosoroff turned to comparison: what other country, he asked, presented circumstances similar to those faced by the Jewish workers in Palestine? It was not easy to find analogous cases, however:

There is almost no example of an effort by a people engaged in settlement (*'am mityashev*) with a European standard of needs to transform a country with a low wage level that is made even lower by the immigration of cheap labor into a site for mass immigration and mass settlement without using coercive means.

The United States offered no useful comparison, for various reasons, nor did Australia and New Zealand, because they had largely excluded nonwhite immigrants. In the end, after reviewing various possibilities, he concluded that 'the territory of the state of South Africa, and the labor question there, is almost the only instance with sufficient similarity in objective conditions and problems to allow us to compare'. As he saw it, the conclusions to be drawn from this comparison had clear implications for labor-Zionist policy in Palestine, notwithstanding the differences between the two cases.

Arlosoroff began by noting that in 1922 there were some 1.5 million people of European origin in South Africa and some 5.5 million non-Europeans, of whom 97% were African or of mixed race. In agriculture, manufacturing and gold mining, native workers vastly outnumbered workers of European origin, though the latter dominated or monopolised the skilled trades, semi-skilled jobs and supervisory positions, and therefore received much higher wages. To maintain the privileged position of white workers, South Africa had barred further immigration from Asia and then, beginning with the 1911 Mines and Works Act (popularly referred to as the 'Color Bar

Act'), reserved broad categories of jobs for white workers. The new National-Labor coalition government that came to power in 1924 in the aftermath of (and in reaction to) the bloody suppression of the 'Rand Rebellion' – a massive general strike and uprising by white mine workers – went even further: it adopted what came to be known as the 'civilised labor policy', designed to protect the jobs, high wages and privileged status of white workers by excluding Africans and other nonwhites from broad segments of the labor market. This policy was manifested in a series of laws and regulations that granted (white) trade unions formal recognition and collective bargaining rights, protected white workers from nonwhite competition in the labor market by establishing minimum wages and working conditions at a 'European' standard, and strengthened the effectiveness of the color bar in the mines and many other industries across the country. Together with laws that sought to confine Africans to 'native reserves' and control their movement, the basis was thus laid for what would after 1948 be expanded, strengthened and systematised into the full-blown apartheid system.<sup>16</sup>

For Arlosoroff the morality of these measures was not the issue:

It does not matter whether we reject this policy [...] or justify it. The entire political dimension of the question does not bear comparison [with Palestine] and does not come into consideration for us [Jews in Palestine]. What is important here is to highlight the economic factors and social relations which brought about, correctly or mistakenly, the color bar laws.

Arlosoroff argued that the Jewish workers in Palestine, confronted as they were with a market dominated by cheap and abundant Arab labor, faced the same basic situation as white workers in South Africa. Of course, he insisted, given the political situation in Palestine they could not pursue the course which the organised white workers in South Africa had followed, of excluding non-Jews from high-wage jobs through legislation and state regulation. Nor, given the linkages between the Arab and Jewish economies in Palestine, could joint

organisation serve any useful purpose: it could not possibly counteract labor market forces and so would only increase downward pressure on Jewish wages, eventually leading most Jewish workers to abandon Palestine. Efforts at joint organisation might also exacerbate political tensions between Arabs and Jews.

'As long as two wage levels exist in Eretz Yisra'el', Arlosoroff concluded,

as long as the local [Arab] economy and the [Jewish] settlement economy are not a single unit and as a result the community of workers has not crystallized into a single body, the development of the two peoples' workers' movements must proceed autonomously in two separate spheres.

In short, despite the slogans and assertions advanced by both Ben-Gurion and the left-Zionist opposition, the conflict between Jewish and Arab workers in Palestine had both real economic roots and a strong national dimension, and it could not be wished away or solved easily or quickly. For decades to come, Arlosoroff predicted, Palestine would contain both a modern, high-wage Jewish economy whose expansion would be fueled by imported capital and a low-wage Arab economy, with the latter gradually adapting to the former. The only economically sound response to the situation of the Jewish workers in Palestine was thus for the Jewish workers' movement to forget about joint organisation and similar pipedreams and instead (with the support of the broader Zionist movement) strive to raise the real wages and living standards of the Jewish workers through investment in infrastructure and services, while at the same time raising the productivity of the Jewish sector through investment in job training and technology. Getting the government of Palestine to close the country's borders to migrant workers from neighboring countries might also help; but in the long run, Arlosoroff insisted, the only way out for the Jewish workers in Palestine was the Hebrew labor policy of exclusion coupled with the fastest possible separate development of the Jewish economy.

When the third congress of the Histadrut actually convened in July 1927, the issue of joint organisation was hotly debated. In the



end, however, while the resolution on Arab-Jewish workers' cooperation that was finally adopted echoed some of Ben-Gurion's slogans, its content manifested Arlosoroff's approach. The resolution acknowledged the need for 'cooperation between Jewish and Arab workers in the vital matters common to them', but immediately qualified this by stating that 'the basis for common action is recognition of the essential value and rights of Jewish immigration to Palestine'. And while it proclaimed the establishment of an 'international alliance of the workers of Palestine', encompassing both Jews and Arabs, it reaffirmed that the Histadrut would remain independent and fully committed to its Zionist mission.<sup>17</sup> In the years that followed Arab workers ceased to occupy a key place in mainstream labor-Zionist discourse and practice, though as I discuss elsewhere Arab workers in politically and economically strategic workplaces were from time to time to be the target of organising efforts by the Histadrut, and at various points right up to 1948 the question of relations with Arab workers and (in the 1940s) with an increasingly vigorous (and often communist-led) Arab labor movement forced its way onto the Histadrut's agenda.<sup>18</sup>

Instead, until the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 the labor-Zionist movement focused on implementing the strategy that had been taking shape since the prewar period and to whose formulation Arlosoroff contributed in the late 1920s. As Michael Shalev so neatly put it, this strategy was based on a 'marriage of convenience' between a workers' movement without work and a settlement movement without settlers.<sup>19</sup> The labor-Zionist parties, from the early years of the twentieth century down to the early 1930s, mobilised a substantial number of highly motivated Jews to emigrate to and settle in Palestine, ready to undertake whatever tasks were necessary in order to lay the foundations of the future Jewish state, while the largely bourgeois-led and -funded Zionist Organization raised the money needed to acquire land for settlement, create infrastructure and jobs, and provide services so that the workers would have a livelihood and be able to serve as the vanguard and shock troops of the settlement project in Palestine itself. The Zionist leadership also worked to maintain good relations with Britain, which ruled Palestine and whose support for Zionism was therefore essential to its success. As I noted earlier, this strategy also helped the labor-Zionist movement become the leading sociopolitical

force first within the Yishuv and then within the international Zionist movement. It would also dominate Israel, politically but also culturally and socially, from that state's foundation in 1948 into the 1970s, when its grip on power was finally broken by the ideological descendents of Revisionist Zionism.

Arlosoroff's own career trajectory reflected the ascendancy of labor Zionism, though he would not live to see its triumph. In 1930 he played a leading role in bringing about the merger of his own party with Ben-Gurion's Ahdut Ha'avoda, producing MAPAI (acronym for Workers' Party of the Land of Israel), one of whose top leaders he became and which in various incarnations would dominate Yishuv and Israeli politics until 1977. A year later Arlosoroff was elected to the executive of the Zionist Organization as a representative of MAPAI and appointed to the key position of director of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency. His ascension to these positions, like Ben-Gurion's elevation to membership of the Jewish Agency executive and a few years later to its chairmanship, signaled MAPAI's growing political power (and that of the labor-Zionist movement it led) within the broader Zionist movement.

In June 1933, however, Arlosoroff was shot and killed while strolling with his wife on the beach in Tel Aviv. This crime was never definitively solved, but at the time (and for decades afterward) labor Zionists blamed the murder on right-wing Zionists angry at (among other things) Arlosoroff's leading role in the early stages of negotiations between the Zionist movement and the virulently antisemitic National Socialist regime which had just come to power in Germany. In these talks Arlosoroff helped lay the groundwork for the 'Transfer Agreement', concluded a few months after his murder, whereby proceeds from the sale of German goods by agencies of the Zionist movement would go partly to German Jews allowed to leave Germany, in compensation for their property seized by the German state, and partly for Zionist state-building purposes in Palestine, including land purchases and industrial development.<sup>20</sup> The Transfer Agreement was extremely controversial, since it sabotaged the international economic boycott which Jewish and other antifascist groups had launched against the still shaky Nazi regime, and it further exacerbated tensions between MAPAI and the Revisionists. But however one assesses that agreement, politically and morally, it

certainly made sense in terms of Arlosoroff's insistence on the crucial importance of developing the Jewish economy in Palestine through the investment of 'national capital' as a way of overcoming labor market conditions disadvantageous to Jewish workers.

## **COERCION, VIOLENCE, DISPLACEMENT**

Arlosoroff's analysis offers a way to more fully understand the limitations of Shafir's focus on the pre-1914 period and on labor Zionism's accommodations to socioeconomic conditions in late-Ottoman Palestine as crucially formative. As we have seen, in his 1927 essay Arlosoroff asserted that there was 'almost no example [i.e., other than Zionism] of an effort by a people engaged in settlement with a European standard of needs to transform a country with a low wage level [...] into a site for mass immigration and mass settlement *without using coercive means*'. I highlight these four words in order to call attention to something crucial that is missing from, or elided in, Arlosoroff's essay but also Shafir's account.

It is certainly true, as Arlosoroff noted, that in the 1920s the Zionist movement lacked the political clout which the organised white workers of South Africa were able to exercise after 1924 and which they used to strengthen and extend the color bar. The Zionist movement did not control the British colonial state in Palestine: while the British authorities were committed to fostering the establishment in Palestine of a 'national home' for the Jewish people, they also sought to avoid completely alienating Palestine's Arab majority and the wider Arab world, and of course they had to take broader imperial interests into account. The Zionist leadership in Palestine and in Britain did, it is true, devote a great deal of time and energy to lobbying the British for preferential treatment, including the allocation of as many government jobs as possible to Jews rather than Arabs. But this was of course not the same as being able to use the apparatus of the state to reserve a broad array of occupational categories for a privileged minority, as was the case in contemporary South Africa.

Nonetheless, during the British colonial period (1918-1948) – i.e., well after the period Shafir deems formative – the labor-Zionist

movement certainly used coercive means to further its Hebrew labor strategy, including boycotts, social pressure, and mass (and sometimes violent) picketing against Jewish employers who refused to employ only Jews.<sup>21</sup> However, the decades-long struggle for Hebrew labor was never entirely successful; indeed, it could not have been successful in the absence of state intervention in the labor market. For example, despite sustained efforts the Histadrut never succeeded (except for a brief period during the 1936-1939 Palestinian Arab revolt) in displacing Arab workers employed on the Jewish citrus plantations, nor could they be entirely kept out of other sectors of the Jewish economy, nor could Jewish workers effectively secure the growing proportion of jobs in the government sector which they sought at the expense of Arab employment.

In reality, it was only *after* the establishment of Israel in 1948 (and a radical transformation of the demographic context) that the struggle for Hebrew labor and the reservation of much of the Israeli labor market for Jews could be won – and (unsurprisingly) this required large-scale state intervention. As Michael Shalev has shown, in the 1950s massive Jewish immigration (mainly from predominantly Arab and Muslim countries) and high unemployment among Jews led the state (working closely with the Histadrut) to try to reserve jobs in the Israeli-Jewish private and public sectors for Jews by barring those Palestinian Arabs still living in (and now formally citizens of) Israel from employment therein. It was only when labor shortages began to develop in the second decade of the state's existence that this policy was relaxed and efforts were made to tap this pool of cheap labor for the benefit of the Jewish-dominated Israeli economy, among other things by finally allowing Palestinian citizens of Israel to join the Histadrut and utilise the labor exchanges it operated.<sup>22</sup>

With this in mind we can see that not only does Shafir's approach leave little room for developments after what he sees as the formative 1904-1914 period, it also fails to grapple with the fact that in and of itself the labor-Zionist strategy of economic separatism and national exclusion did not – *could not* – have played the decisive role in paving the way for the triumph of the Zionist project which Shafir attributes to it. Ultimately, that strategy could succeed only because it unfolded within a context shaped by other dynamics, most

importantly for our purposes, state action, various forms of coercion, and violent conflict.

Before 1948 and even after, a significant proportion of that coercion and violence was not deployed directly by the Zionist movement or by Israel; rather, it was effected or enabled by others. From its inception the Zionist project required, and vigorously sought, support and protection from an outside power in order to overcome its demographic and other disadvantages on the ground, within Palestine and in the wider region, not to mention growing indigenous resistance. Theodor Herzl, who founded the Zionist Organization in 1897, devoted much of his time and energy over the years that followed to an effort (unsuccessful in his lifetime) to secure for Zionism the backing of one or another of the great powers of Europe, out of an entirely correct assessment that without such backing Zionism would likely end up as just another of the many utopian schemes floating around Europe in that period.<sup>23</sup> The Zionist effort to secure big-power support was finally crowned with success in 1917, when Britain endorsed this project and for the next quarter-century facilitated the implantation of a viable Jewish society in Palestine, though not without hesitations and conflicts.

As a result, until the end of the Second World War, most of the state action and coercion required to facilitate the success of Zionism in the face of increasingly vociferous Palestinian Arab opposition to a Jewish majority and a Jewish state in Palestine was exercised not by the Zionist movement itself but by the British colonial state. Indeed, without British support and protection the Zionist project in Palestine would simply not have gotten very far. It is, for example, highly doubtful that, even after almost two decades of large-scale immigration, settlement and development under British protection, the Yishuv on its own could have withstood the 1936-1939 Palestinian Arab revolt against British colonial rule and Zionism; nor would it have been able to develop demographically, militarily, politically, economically and socially to the point at which it could challenge British control of Palestine in 1945-47 and then go on to defeat its Palestinian and Arab enemies and seize control of three-quarters of the country.

But other outside powers also played critical roles in Zionism's successes. Israel's victory in 1948-49 was greatly facilitated by a

unique international conjuncture which enabled it to win political support from both the United States and the USSR, and much of the weaponry crucial to Israel's early military successes was provided by Czechoslovakia, where the communists seized full control in February 1948. From the early 1950s into the early 1960s Israel developed a close military and political alliance with France, based on a common hostility to the rising tide of Arab nationalism, which sustained both the Palestinian cause and the Algerian struggle for independence. Then, beginning in the mid-1960s but much more vigorously and massively after Israel's victory in the June 1967 war, the United States became Israel's main external funder, provider of arms, and political backer. In other words, widening the frame of analysis to include not just Palestine but also the relevant colonial and international contexts can help us see the forms of coercion and violence which always crucially underpinned the Zionist project and were necessary to its success.

In addition to taking external support fully into account, any explanation of the success of labor Zionism's strategy and of the broader Zionist project of creating a Jewish state in an overwhelmingly Arab land must attend to the violence bound up with the form of partition actually implemented in 1947-49, and to the consequences of that violence. In the passage quoted earlier Shafir asserted that labor Zionism's strategy of economic separatism, the basis of its eventual acceptance of partition, originated in 'the inescapable facts of Palestinian demography'. But those demographic facts were in reality quite escapable, by means of the massive displacement, through wartime flight and expulsion, of the great majority of the Arabs who lived in the part of Palestine that became Israel in 1947-49 – a process in which officials and army officers drawn from the labor-Zionist movement played the leading role.<sup>24</sup> It is also worth recalling that Ben-Gurion and his colleagues refrained from trying to conquer the remainder of mandate Palestine in 1948-49 not because they preferred a smaller but more demographically Jewish state, and much less because of any principled commitment to sharing the land with its Arab inhabitants. Rather, they understood that attempting to conquer all of Palestine would have embroiled the new State of Israel in conflict with Transjordan (its partner in dividing up Palestine), with Britain, and probably with the United States and the Soviet Union as well.<sup>25</sup>

One might therefore reformulate Shafir's argument about the linkage between economic separatism and partition and instead assert that, in the long run, the full realisation of labor Zionism's strategy of economic separatism *required* the use of coercion and violence in order to physically displace most or all of the Palestinians living within the boundaries of the Jewish state. That is, the precondition for achieving the (metaphorical) conquest of labor was the (military) conquest of the land and the displacement of most of its Palestinian inhabitants.

Hayyim Arlosoroff came to understand this toward the very end of his relatively short life. In his 1927 essay he had insisted that 'the entire political dimension of the question [of legally establishing the color bar and white supremacy in South Africa] does not bear comparison [with Palestine] and does not come into consideration for us [Jews in Palestine]'. But within a few years he seems to have concluded that the achievement of the goals of Zionism would ultimately require more than the patient, long-term work of immigration, land purchase, settlement and the development of an exclusively Jewish, high-wage economy in Palestine; the use of force would ultimately be inescapable if Zionism were to succeed. In a June 1932 letter to Hayyim Weizmann, president of the Zionist Organization, that was not made public until 1949, Arlosoroff outlined what he saw as the stark choices facing their movement. Growing Arab opposition to Zionism and pressure for the termination of the British mandate might lead to independence for Palestine while Jews were still a minority. Avoiding the destruction of the Zionist project might in those circumstances require

a transitional period of the organized revolutionary rule of the Jewish minority [...] a nationalist minority government which would usurp the state machinery, the administration and the military power in order to forestall the danger of our being swamped by numbers and endangered by a rising. During this period of transition a systematic policy of development, immigration and settlement would be carried out.<sup>26</sup>

This is, of course, similar to what happened in Rhodesia in 1965, when the white minority government declared independence from Britain in order to prevent majority rule. It also bears some resemblance to the events of 1947-49 in Palestine, when (with the endorsement of much of the international community) the Jewish minority (still less than one-third of the country's population as of May 1948) defeated its enemies and carved out a state in most of Palestine, developments accompanied and facilitated by the displacement of more than half of the country's indigenous Arab population.

### **THE 'POST-1967 MISTAKE'?**

However we view those events, it is clear that coercion, violence and state intervention played central roles in shaping the history of Palestine after 1914, including the realisation of the Zionist project and the molding of Israel's character and trajectory. In this light we may want to consider a remark that Shafir made in the original preface to his book, concerning what he termed the 'post-1967 mistake'. This was

the view [of many Israelis] that the process of Israeli territorial accumulation did not end in 1948 but should continue through the *de facto* or *de jure* annexation of the occupied territories and their population to Israel, thus eliminating the possibility of a Palestine side by side with Israel.

Going down this path, Shafir asserted, 'would entail the repudiation of the painfully learned historical lesson that in Eretz Israel/Palestine there is no realistic alternative to sovereignty expressed through and limited by territorial partition'.<sup>27</sup>

This framing is consistent with Shafir's tracing of the roots of territorial compromise to the early historical experience and strategy of labor Zionism, particularly its embrace of a variant of the pure settlement model. In many ways that model, whose origins Shafir so masterfully excavated and reconstructed, and the mind-set that



accompanied it, do in fact remain dominant in Israel. Polls and voting preferences suggest that the great majority of Israeli Jews continue today to favor an Israel that is as demographically Jewish as possible; and even much (though not all) of the Zionist right now claims to be willing to relinquish control of some territory in the West Bank (and of course of Gaza) in order to ensure that Israel proper retains a large Jewish majority.

Yet if we look back over the 130 years or so of Zionist activity in Palestine and broaden our understanding of what it actually took to get from the exigencies of early Zionist settlement in late-Ottoman Palestine to a Jewish state that now dominates all of Palestine, we may question whether the disposition toward territorial compromise that Shafir argued was embedded in the pure settlement model can plausibly be regarded as the essence of the Zionist project, its originary and authentic nature, from which Israel's post-1967 trajectory has been a deviation, a 'mistake' as Shafir called it. It is not at all obvious that, historically or in the present, the pure settlement model has actually conduced to partition, in the sense of Zionism's (and Israel's) serious acceptance of the Palestinians' right to self-determination and statehood in some part of their homeland. Indeed, rather than understanding the half-century of labor-Zionist preeminence (and its avowed acceptance of territorial compromise) as Zionism's normal or natural state, from which post-1967 developments have been an abnormal deviation, we might understand labor Zionism's interest in partition as bound up with one particular stage in the history of the Zionist project, a stage whose conditions of possibility were delimited by demographic realities in Palestine and by Zionism's lack of state power (before 1948), and then by Israel's control of only part of Palestine (before 1967).

As we have seen, the economic and, by extension, political separatism which Shafir posited as central to labor-Zionist logic could not have sufficed to realise Zionism's goals. The establishment of a Jewish state in any significant part of Palestine also required displacement of as much of the indigenous population as possible and the subordination of the remainder, and that could only have been realised through the large-scale use of coercion and violence. Once Israel was established in 1948 as a state that defined itself as representing not its citizens but rather the Jewish people everywhere,

it was able to deploy state power systematically and effectively to further the Zionist settlement project. This was effected through, as we have seen, the initial exclusion of non-Jews from much of the labor market, but also, and more critically, by means of the massive expropriation for exclusive Jewish use of land owned by Palestinians, including those who were displaced in 1947-49 but also many of those who were now formally citizens of Israel. And after the conquest of the remainder of Palestine in 1967 the apparently inexorable logic of Jewish land acquisition and settlement was extended to the West Bank and Gaza, for the most part with the support or at least acquiescence of the avowed heirs of labor Zionism.

Since 1967, but especially since the beginning of the 'Oslo period' in the early 1990s when Israeli-Palestinian negotiations were in progress, the system of Israeli control over the Palestinians has seemed to move toward something more closely resembling the apartheid South Africa model of racial/national/ethnic separation, minority rule and *herrenvolk* democracy, though (significantly) without the massive dependence on indigenous labor that characterised South Africa.<sup>28</sup> In a sense, then, what we have is the continuation of the pure settlement model (an insistence on maintaining a predominantly Jewish state in as much of Palestine as possible) coupled with that state's forcible domination of the remainder of Palestine and the coercive and often violent subordination of its non-Jewish population (much of it now contained behind various physical barriers). There are certainly many in Israel who (like Shafir) regard what has happened since 1967 as a terrible mistake and believe that to remain a Jewish (and democratic) state Israel must withdraw from the territories occupied in 1967. But a powerful Zionist logic of settlement, expansion and displacement works against such an outcome.

As a result, a state which rules in the name of its five and a half million Israeli Jewish citizens (and claims to speak for all Jews everywhere) today dominates, directly or indirectly, all of what was once Palestine, ruling over a million and a quarter Palestinians who are second-class citizens and another four and a quarter million Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem who are at the receiving end of an oppressive and often brutal Israeli apparatus

of control. An additional four or five million or so Palestinians, mostly descendents of those displaced in 1948, live outside of historic Palestine, in the Middle East and beyond. Thus, an enfranchised, privileged group – today perhaps still a very slight majority of the land's total population but within a few years almost certain to become a minority within historic Palestine – rules by force over a subordinated and largely disenfranchised soon-to-be majority.

Accounting fully for these developments is beyond the scope of this essay, but one critical factor may be highlighted by noting the dramatic contrast between the growing political, economic and moral isolation in which apartheid South Africa found itself by the late 1980s, on the one hand, and on the other the massive and virtually unwavering political, economic and military support which the United States has extended to Israel since the mid-1960s. It is this support – not something which Shafir's approach could take into account – which in very large measure has enabled Israel to maintain a brutal military occupation, seize land and other resources from the Palestinian population in the territories occupied in 1967, implant a massive array of Jewish settlements there, launch repeated military assaults on Palestinians and others (e.g., the Lebanese), and defy a nearly universal consensus on a reasonable resolution of its conflict with the Palestinians.

Today, as for most if not all of the past century, then, for all the importance one must attribute to local specificities, interactions and dynamics, there is no making sense of this particular settler-colonial project and the ongoing bloody conflicts it continues to generate without taking into account the ways in which it has consistently been protected, sustained and enabled by one or another external great power patron – again highlighting the centrality of state power (local and global), coercion and violence to this as to other similar projects.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Zachary Lockman is professor of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies and of History at New York University. His publications include *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism (2004/2009)*, *Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906-1948 (1996)*, and (with Joel Beinin) *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islam, and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882-1954 (1987)*.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> On the question of Zionism as a settler-colonial movement, see (*inter alia*) Maxime Rodinson, *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State?* (New York: Monad Press, 1973); Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989; updated edition, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Lorenzo Veracini, *Israel and Settler Society* (London: Pluto, 2006); Derek Penslar, *Israel in History: the Jewish State in Comparative Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2007), ch. 5; and Gabriel Piterberg, *The Returns of Zionism: Myths, Politics and Scholarship in Israel* (London: Verso, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> See for example Yonathan Shapiro, *The Formative Years of the Israeli Labour Party: the Organisation of Power, 1919-1930* (London: Sage Publications, 1976), and Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled, *Being Israeli: the Dynamics of Multiple Citizenship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Zionist historiography deploys a periodisation built around a series of distinct waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine, known as *aliyot* (singular: *aliya*). By this reckoning the First Aliya – the first substantial influx of Jewish immigrants motivated by a vision of national revival – began in 1881 and ended in 1903. It was followed by the Second Aliya of 1904-1914 and so on, down to 1948 and the establishment of the State of Israel.

<sup>4</sup> See for example S. N. Eisenstadt, *Israeli Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1967).

<sup>5</sup> Shafir cites D.K. Fieldhouse, *The Colonial Empires: A Comparative Survey from the Eighteenth Century* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1966), and George Frederickson, 'Colonialism and Racism: The United States and South Africa in Comparative Perspective', in George Frederickson, *The Arrogance of Race: Historical Perspectives on Slavery, Racism and Social Inequality* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988).

<sup>6</sup> For a fuller discussion of these and related issues see Zachary Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906-1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, p. 19.

<sup>8</sup> See my review of Shafir's book in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 19, 4 (1990), pp. 115-117.

<sup>9</sup> Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, pp. xiii-xiv.

<sup>10</sup> For a brief (and rather uncritical) introduction to Arlosoroff's life and thought, see Shlomo Avineri, *Arlosoroff* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1989). See also Miriam

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Geter, *Hayyim Arlozorov: biografiya politit* (Hayyim Arlosoroff: a Political Biography) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hame'uhad, 1977).

<sup>11</sup> For a brief introduction to the origins and import of the Balfour Declaration see Zachary Lockman, 'Balfour Declaration', in Joel Krieger et al. (eds.), *The Oxford Companion to International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming 2012). For a recent study see Jonathan Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration: the Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New York: Random House, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> Early Labor Zionists often referred to themselves and their organisations as 'Hebrew' ('ivri) rather than 'Jewish' (yehudi) to express their denigration and rejection of Diaspora Judaism and to instead identify themselves with the ancient Hebrews who had lived as a sovereign people in their own homeland – as modern Zionists aspired to do. This identification also helped these Jewish immigrants newly arrived from Europe envision themselves as having a deep historical connection to Palestine, thereby giving them a claim to possess it stronger than that of its indigenous Arab inhabitants.

<sup>13</sup> This conjuncture is discussed more fully in Zachary Lockman, 'Exclusion and Solidarity: Labor Zionism and Arab Workers in Palestine, 1897-1929', in Gyan Prakash (ed.), *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

<sup>14</sup> On the history of this political tendency see Elkana Margalit, *Anatomia shel smol: Po'alei Tziyon Smol be'erezt yisra'el* (Anatomy of a Left: Po'alei Tziyon Smol in the Land of Israel) (Jerusalem: Hebrew University press, 1976).

<sup>15</sup> Hayyim Arlosoroff (rendered in Hebrew as Arlozorov), *Leshe'eilat ha'irgun hameshutaf* (On the Question of Joint Organisation) (Tel Aviv: Hapo'el Hatza'ir, 1927). All translations from the Hebrew are mine. Gabriel Piterberg's *The Returns of Zionism* includes a very interesting discussion of this same essay, though from a different angle than mine and in the service of a somewhat different argument.

<sup>16</sup> The scholarly literature on modern South African history is large and complex. An interesting starting point might be George Fredrickson, *White Supremacy: a Comparative Study in American and South African History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

<sup>17</sup> Histadrut archives, Tel Aviv, minutes of the Third Congress of the Histadrut.

<sup>18</sup> See Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*.

<sup>19</sup> Michael Shalev, *Labour and the Political Economy in Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 35.

<sup>20</sup> See Edwin Black, *The Transfer Agreement: the Untold Story of the Secret Agreement between the Third Reich and Jewish Palestine* (New York: MacMillan, 1984).

<sup>21</sup> See Anita Shapira, *Hama'avak Hanikhzav: 'Avoda 'Ivrit, 1929-1939* (The Futile Struggle: Hebrew Labor, 1929-1939) (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 1977), and Stephen A. Glazer, 'Picketing for Hebrew Labor: a Window on Histadrut Tactics and Strategy', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 30, 4 (2001), pp. 39-54.

<sup>22</sup> See Shalev, *Labour and the Political Economy in Israel*.

<sup>23</sup> For a brief introduction to Zionism (and a bibliography), see Zachary Lockman, 'Zionism', in Cheryl A. Rubenberg (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2010), vol. 3.

<sup>24</sup> See Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), but also Nur Masalha, *The Expulsion of the Palestinians: the Concept of Transfer in Zionist Thought, 1882-1948* (Washington, DC: Institute of Palestine Studies, 1992).

<sup>25</sup> See Avi Shlaim, *The Politics of Partition: King Abdullah, the Zionists and Palestine, 1921-1951* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Avineri, *Arlosoroff*, p. 95. Characteristically, Avineri works hard to explain away this unseemly passage.

<sup>27</sup> Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, pp. xii, xiv.

<sup>28</sup> See for example Oren Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006). From 1967 until the early 1990s, large numbers of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza were employed within Israel. Since the early Oslo years, however, Palestinian workers have been largely barred from entering Israel, while large number of migrant workers from other countries have been imported to replace them in the lowest strata of the Israeli labor force.