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The driving force of anti-Zionism

Israel's dropping of socialism for a capitalist economy

• By FYODOR KUSHNIRSKY

The October 7 Hamas terrorist attack sparked widespread world protests against Israel's military response to terrorists' murdering, raping, and taking civilian hostages of all ages. Per Reuters, there were 3,761 pro-Palestinian demonstrations in the first month of the campaign. Anti-Zionism is the term used for the characterization of the movement.

The idea of Zionism was developed in the 19th century by Theodor Herzl, who called for the creation of a homeland for the Jewish people in Israel as a reaction to antisemitism and the push for assimilation in Europe. Anti-Zionism is thus a euphemism for anti-Israel. However, because one-fifth of the citizens of Israel are Arabs, the anger is directed at the Jews only. An even more important clarification is that anti-Zionism has been directed at all Jewry, regardless of their nationality. Why has antisemitism exploded now? Was it simply hidden before?

In December 2023, the US House of Representatives approved a resolution equating anti-Zionism to antisemitism. Much religious and philosophical thought attributes the existence of antisemitism to the lasting impact of anti-Jewish tropes in early Christianity. Consequently, some left-wing Jews state that antisemitism is prevalent among Christians, a conservative segment of American society. However, the reality is that the condemnation of Jews for killing Christ has been repudiated by almost every Christian denomination.

Anti-Zionism emerged and expanded because of the remarkable transformation of Israeli society since its creation in 1948. The founders, East European socialists, formed the Mapai party, the Workers Party of the Land of Israel, a dominant force in Israeli politics and economy until the 1970s. To the founders, socialism was the dream, an ideal on which to build a paradise: Workers had to join a labor union, the Histadrut, which co-shared ownership of industrial enterprises, banks, transportation, and agriculture with the government. Hired labor was declared an anathema in the kibbutz collective agriculture. Mapai's progressive reforms set a welfare state with mandatory guaranteed income, housing subsidies, free education, and the like.

When Israel was living in a hand-to-mouth economy, it was welcomed by multiple progressive organizations. In 1951 a triumphant admission to the Socialist International (SI) took place. The SI affirmed the right of Israel to exist and called "for negotiations between the Arabs and Israelis to find a permanent solution to the existing problems on the basis of their independence and sovereignty."

Israel did not stay in the socialist column for long.



HISTADRUT CHAIRMAN Arnon Bar-David attends a Histadrut conference in Tel Aviv, last year. Says the writer: Many left-wing American Jews got confused and uneasy; is the only Jewish state socialist or has it become capitalistic? (Avshalom Sassoni/Flash90)

Despite huge bureaucracy, multiple ministries, and the wasteful Histadrut, education and hard work let the nation create a free-market economy and significantly elevated its ranking in the World Prosperity Index. Experts indicate that Israel's modern infrastructure has rivaled many Western countries and its hi-tech sector is competitive with Silicon Valley. Many left-wing American Jews became confused and uneasy: Is the only Jewish state socialist or has it become capitalistic?

Judaism is a complicated religion and Jewish scholars often answer "Yes and no," when confronted with complex philosophical questions. For example, Yehuda Levi, professor of electro-optic at the Jerusalem College of Technology (JCT) states: "Judaism is capitalism with a socialist spirit." Apparently, the "spirit" alone is not enough for the progressive world. The affronted SI responded by joining the BDS (Boycott, Divest, and Sanctions) movement in 2018 and approved a resolution condemning Israel (a member state), forcing the latter to drop out of the organization.

The BDS resolution was echoed by many other progressive, governmental, and student organizations. The extent of the harsh reaction could be understood, considering that the betrayal on the

part of Israel happened in the Middle East, a part of the world which they thought to be united in its struggle against imperialism.

To explain why Marx's prediction of an imminent collapse of capitalism failed, the leader of the Soviet revolution, Lenin, created a theory of imperialism as the highest stage of capitalism. The theory explains that workers in developed countries do not revolt because capitalists there are able to bribe them, due to super-profits extracted from the exploitation of colonies. Hence, Israel is considered an "exploiter" in an erroneous location. The issue of the "erroneous location" emerged on the very first day of the existence of Israel as a modern state. Yet there has been no territorial expansion in Israel since the 1967 Six Day War, so this issue cannot be a reason for the current explosion of anti-Zionist demonstrations all around the globe.

One of Israel's implicit crimes is that it turned its back on socialism and set a bad example for developing countries. As a verdict, those who chant "From the river to the sea" specify where they want the Jews to end up.

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