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Intro to Anarchists & Fellow Travellers on Palestine

M. Gouldhawke

2024

Anarchists over the course of history have never had a unified stance on Palestine and Zionism.

Some Jewish anarchists active in the late 19th century and early 20th century, such as Bernard Lazare and Hillel Solotaroff, drifted toward Zionism over time (as noted by Mina Grauer in an article from 1994).

In 1906, Jewish anarchist Emma Goldman published an pseudonymously-authored article by a fellow Jewish anarchist criticizing Zionism, as well as nationalism more generally, and claiming that "Prejudices are never overcome by one who shows himself equally narrow and bigoted."

The Russian anarchist Peter Kropotkin in 1907 debated Zionism with a Jewish anarchist by the name of Yarblum in the pages of the anarchist journal, *Listki Khleb i Volia*, with Kropotkin taking a stance against the formation of the Zionist state in Palestine (also noted by Grauer in 1994).

In 1913, Gustav Landauer, a Jewish-German anarchist, seemingly exalted the Jewish diaspora over the proposed Zionist state, as he claimed that "the Jews can only be redeemed

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Intro to a collection of links to texts by various writers.

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with [all of] humanity, and that the two are one and the same: to pursue persistently the messiah in [national] banishment and dispersion, and to be the messiah of the nations” (as noted by Paul Mendes-Flohr in 2015).

In the wake of the 1929 al-Buraq Disturbances in Palestine, the Italian anarchists Camillo Berneri and Nino Napolitano wrote articles denouncing British imperialism and the oppression of the Palestinian people (Berneri additionally addressed antisemitism in his 1935 booklets, *The Racist Delirium* and *Le Juif antisémite*).

Also in 1929 and in reference to the same disturbances, Jewish anarchists debated Zionism in the Yiddish-language anarchist newspaper, *Di fraye arbeter shtime* (as noted and translated recently by Eyshe Beirich); while the Mexican anarchist newspaper, *Verbo Rojo*, published an article criticizing Zionism through a condemnation of nationalism more broadly (as noted recently by A.W. Zurbrugg).

In 1938, the Italian-English anarchist Vernon Richards wrote a book review article proclaiming that the “Arab demand for independence is far from vague in its significance [...] And we further add that Zionism will not solve the Jewish problems.”

Beginning in 1939, Albert Meltzer, an English anarchist born to a Jewish family, wrote several articles against Zionism and British imperialism in Palestine; while in his 1996 autobiography, Meltzer related from personal experience a part of the violent political and military context leading up to the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948.

From the Nakba (Catastrophe) to today, many anarchists have continued to support the fight for Palestinian liberation (and in some cases are themselves Palestinians fighting for the liberation of their own people), while also carrying on the critique of fellow anarchists’ stances on the matter.

Historically, anarchists have a long and contradictory history of engagement with colonialism and national liberation

more generally, of which the subjects of Palestine and Zionism form a constituent part.

This page is an attempt to collect some of the statements by anarchists and their fellow travellers that seem most relevant to the Palestinian struggle and to anarchist solidarity with that fight, or at least to an overview of anarchist perspectives on Palestine and Zionism.

When it comes to fellow travellers, to my knowledge, Reginald Reynolds, Mustapha Khayati, Lafif Lakhdar, Fredy Perlman and Bassel al-Araj did not self-identify as anarchists. However, in my view, they were anarchist-adjacent enough (to varying extents) to have their writing included in this collection. Aside from these authors, and those in the specified section on Aaron Bushnell’s action, all the other writers whose texts are found here did or do self-identify as anarchists, as far as I can tell.

I myself do not agree with every point made in each of these articles, particularly Emma Goldman’s 1938 text implicitly invoking John Locke (regarding the ideology of entitlement to other people’s land granted through invasion and individual labour, a point critiqued in the same time period by fellow traveller Reginald Reynolds) and Sam Dolgoff’s ideological defense of the Israeli state, but I include them due to their historical significance and to show that anarchists have had conflicting (and even self-contradictory) positions on Palestine and Zionism.

M.Gouldhawke (May 2024)