Anarchism in Israel and Palestine

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Massey, D., (Ed.) (2002) *It's All Lies: Leaflets, Underground Press and Posters – The Fusion of Resistance and Creativity in Israel.* Tel-Aviv: APICC.

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Ta'ayush (Arab-Jewish Partnership), though not nominally anarchist, organized informally to break sieges to bring supplies into Palestinian towns and defend farmers from settlers and soldiers as they cultivated their land. From summer 2001 many international anarchists arrived in Palestine with the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), accompanying Palestinian non-violent actions to tear down military roadblocks and break curfews, and serving as human shields and live witnesses during the Israeli offensive of spring 2002. The ISM was weakened following the killing of its volunteers Rachel Corrie and Tom Hurndall in the Gaza Strip, and a repressive Israeli campaign including raids on its flats and offices, deportations, and denials of entry.

From spring 2003 Israeli anarchists began to organize autonomously to cooperate with Palestinians and internationals, particularly in the campaign against the construction of the Israeli Segregation Barrier in the West Bank. Invited by farmers from the village of Mas'ha, the group built a protest and outreach camp on their land, about to be confiscated for the fence. The camp lasted four months and led to the founding of the group Anarchists Against the Wall. Anarchists remain active in the West Bank and inside Israel, and have led the opposition to the second Lebanon war in August 2006.

REFERENCES AND SUGGESTED READINGS

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Panthers – a militant movement of second-generation Jews from North African countries. During and after the 1973 war, the Black Front/Trippy Anarchist Group, based in a commune in Tel-Aviv, was active, producing flyers and pamphlets, and publishing *Liberation News* and the anti-militarist comic book *Freaky*. Radical student cells were active in Tel-Aviv (1975–6) and Jerusalem (1986–7). Protests against the first Lebanon war saw the release of subversive propaganda by the Committee for Public Health (1982–7), and the founding of the Israeli chapter of War Resisters International by Hungarian-Israeli anarchopacifist Yeshaayahu Toma-Schick (1939–2004).

From the late 1980s anarchism was central to the politicized section of the punk movement and to army refusal and evasion during the first Palestinian Intifada. The Israeli Anarchist Federation (1991–3) held demonstrations against police brutality and Israel's first McDonald's outlet, put on benefit concerts, and later spawned the militant animal rights group Anonymous. Direct action and propaganda groups such as the Isra-hell Collective and the Anarchist Brigade of the Northern Galilee released photocopied political magazines including "It's All Lies" and "The War of Words." Tel-Aviv's Left Bank club was founded to provide a space for radical punk shows, talks, and exhibitions.

The movement grew quickly in the late 1990s with the anti-capitalist environmental group Green Action and the direct action campaign against the construction of the Cross-Israel Highway, which connected issues of pollution, open spaces, Arab land rights, and government-corporate collusion. Inspired by the major anti-capitalist protests in London and Seattle at the end of 1999, Israeli activists began organizing Reclaim the Streets parties and Food Not Bombs stalls, and founded the Salon Mazal infoshop and the Israeli Independent Media Center (Indymedia).

The second Intifada reinvigorated Israeli radicals' anti-occupation and Palestinian solidarity efforts. The network

Anarchism has been a political undercurrent in Israel and Palestine for a century, appearing in three disconnected waves: the libertarian socialism of the early Kibbutz communes, the publishing and cultural activities of Yiddish-speaking immigrants, and contemporary Israeli anarchism. In Palestinian society there are individual sympathizers but no organized anarchist movement, with Marxist parties such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) leading the secular left wing. Yet the first Intifada (1987–9) drew widespread support from anarchists as a grassroots uprising involving tax refusal, general strikes, urban confrontation, and the establishment of underground schools and mutual aid projects. Since 2000, Israeli and international anarchists have been leading solidarity campaigns in Palestine.

EARLY KIBBUTZ MOVEMENT, 1910–1926

Anarchist ideas circulated widely in the second and third waves of Jewish immigration to Palestine, and were central to the formation of the early Kibbutzim. The first 28 communes were founded in 1910–14, following labor disputes and strikes at the colonies established during the first wave of immigration. The founders, mostly young and unmarried, built the communes on principles of collectivism, equality, and self-management, aspiring to create a free socialist society of Jews and Arabs in Palestine.

Anarchism was highly influential within the communards' party, Hapoel Hatzair (Young Worker), whose paper included articles by and about Proudhon and Kropotkin. Aharon David Gordon (1856–1922), a forestry clerk who immigrated as a laborer to Palestine aged 47, became a spiritual leader of Hapoel Hatzair and was very close to anarchism. Influenced by Hassidic mysticism and the writings of Nietzsche and Tolstoy, Gordon promoted collective manual labor as a key to Jewish regen-

eration, and spiritual liberation through creativity and reconnection to nature. A staunch anti-militarist and pacifist, Gordon did not speak of a Jewish state and called for respect and cooperation with Arab peasants.

Joseph Trumpeldor (1880–1920), an immigrant soldier who organized early Jewish defense forces, was influenced by Kropotkin and Tolstoy and declared himself "an anarcho-communist and a Zionist." Inspired by Trumpeldor, Gdud Haavoda (Labor Battalion) was formed as a decentralized commune whose bands of construction workers sought to establish a General Commune in Palestine.

Gustav Landauer had a direct influence on members of Hashomer Hatzair (Young Guardsman), an immigrating Zionist-socialist youth movement who founded a federation of new Kibbutzim in the third wave of immigration from 1919. Its members made explicit references to anarchism in their calls for communal independence, egalitarian relationships, direct democracy, and spiritual renewal.

In the later 1920s, with the influx of private capital into the country and increasing economic and political control of the Kibbutzim by the central Jewish institutions in Palestine dominated by Ben Gurion's Mapai Party, anarchist tendencies in Palestine weakened.

YIDDISH ANARCHISM, 1948–1989

After the State of Israel was established, anarchist circles formed among the Yiddishspeaking survivors of Nazism who immigrated to the country. The earliest was led in Tel-Aviv by Eliezer Hirschauge (1911–54), formerly an exponent of anarchism among Hassidic youth in Warsaw and author of a history of Polish anarchism. Activities took an upswing with the arrival in 1958 of prolific anarchist theorist, critic, and translator Abba Gordin (1887–1964). Gordin, a key member

of the Moscow Anarchist Federation, had been living in New York since 1925, where he published the literary-philosophical review *Yiddishe Shriften* (1936–57).

In Israel, Gordin founded the anarchist circle ASHUACH (Agudat Shocharei Chofesh, Freedom-Seekers Association), who had a large meeting-hall and a library of classic anarchist works in Yiddish, Hebrew, and Polish. ASHUACH had approximately 150 members and hundreds attended the lectures it organized. Gordin edited the association's monthly review in Yiddish and Hebrew, *Problemen/Problemot*. The review largely played down revolutionary propaganda in favor of philosophical and literary essays, and was especially interested in the spiritual roots of anarchism and in classical Jewish and current Yiddish literature. Gordin also regularly corresponded with prominent Yiddish anarchist publications in New York (*Freie Arbeiter Stimmë*) and Buenos Aires (*Dos Freie Wort*).

After Gordin's death, *Problemen* was edited by Shmuel Abarbanel until 1971, when Joseph Luden (1908 –) assumed editorship and affiliated the review (now printed only in Yiddish) with a publishing house that released over fifteen Yiddish books and pamphlets of fiction and poetry. ASHUACH came to a halt in the 1980s as the old anarchists passed away, and the final (165th) issue of *Problemen* (December 1989) was the last Yiddish anarchist periodical publication in the world.

ISRAELI ANARCHISM, 1967-PRESENT

Anarchist tendencies were present in the Israeli anti-militarist and anti-capitalist Left since its emergence, following the 1967 occupation of the Palestinian Territories and parallel to the wave of radicalism in western countries. Libertarians were active in the Israeli Socialist Organization (1967–77), which issued the paper *Matzpen* and cooperated with the Israeli Black