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The British New Labour Party and Political Zionism:
Continuity of an *Essential Dilemma*.

by

Ian Martin Nelson

A thesis submitted for the fulfillment of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Institute for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (IMEIS)

School of Government and International Affairs

Ustinov College

Durham University

(2001-2008)



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17 APR 2009



Previous page: *David with the Head of Goliath* (c.1610) by Michelangelo Merisi di Caravaggio (1571-1610), housed in the Galleria Borghese, Rome.

Inspired by the martyrdom of St. John the Baptist, Valletta, Malta, the depictions of David's slaying of Goliath - the Philistine - illustrates how western Art and culture established the representation, perceptions and understandings of the conflict between the ancient Israelites and the Philistines as the triumph of good over evil. David (future King of Israel) is the threatened and righteously vulnerable figure, and Goliath (from the city State Gath, Philistine, lower Canaan, modern Gaza) is the slain menacing warrior perpetrating violence. These depictions account for the introduction and adoption of 'Philistine/s' as a derogatory term of reference for those perceived to be un-cultured, uncivilised, ignorant, inferior and inherently violent. Until the post-1967 six-day war period Israel was generally identified as David, the Arab states as Goliath; after 1967 this perception began to change and reverse to the extent that by 1987 the Palestinians were identified as David.

Source: <http://www.galleriaborghese.it/borghese/en/edavicara.htm>

The British New Labour Party and Political Zionism:
Continuity of an *Essential Dilemma*

The Institute for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (IMEIS)
School of Government and International Affairs

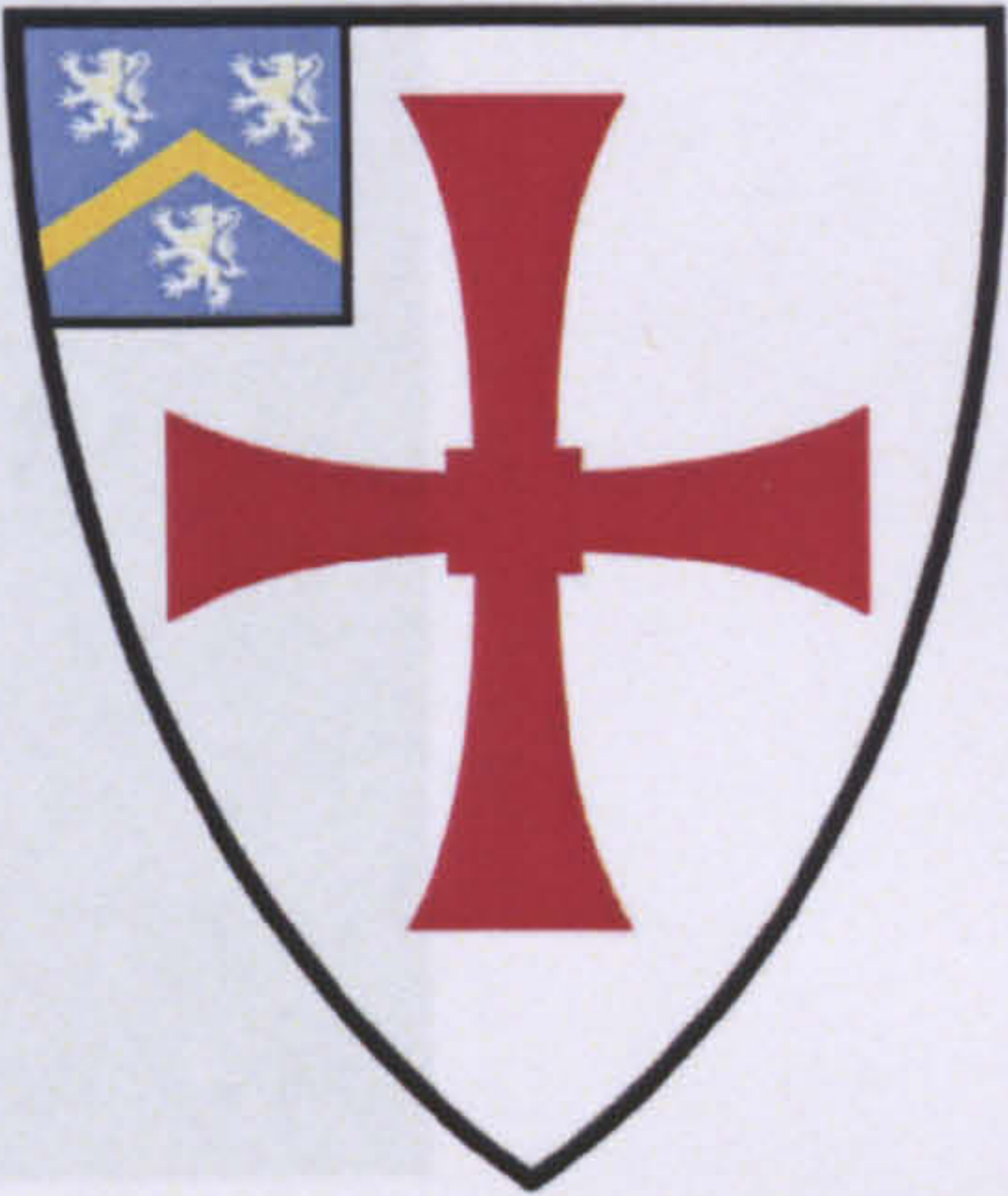
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Durham University
(2001 – 2008)

Ustinov College



Diversitate Valemus
(Diversity is our Strength)

Durham University



Fundamenta eius super montibus sanctis
(Her foundations are set upon the Holy hills)

¹ Lionel Jacobs participated in the 'Battle of Cable Street' (October 4, 1936) against the British Union of Fascists, and fought for the Spanish Republican Government in the civil war (1936-1939). A life-long Communist and non-political Zionist, Lionel was born in Hackney, East London, and is buried in the Jewish cemetery, Wilford Hill, Nottingham.

*For: Irene Maud Stevenitt (1919-1998) and Lionel Jacobs (1912-1996)*¹

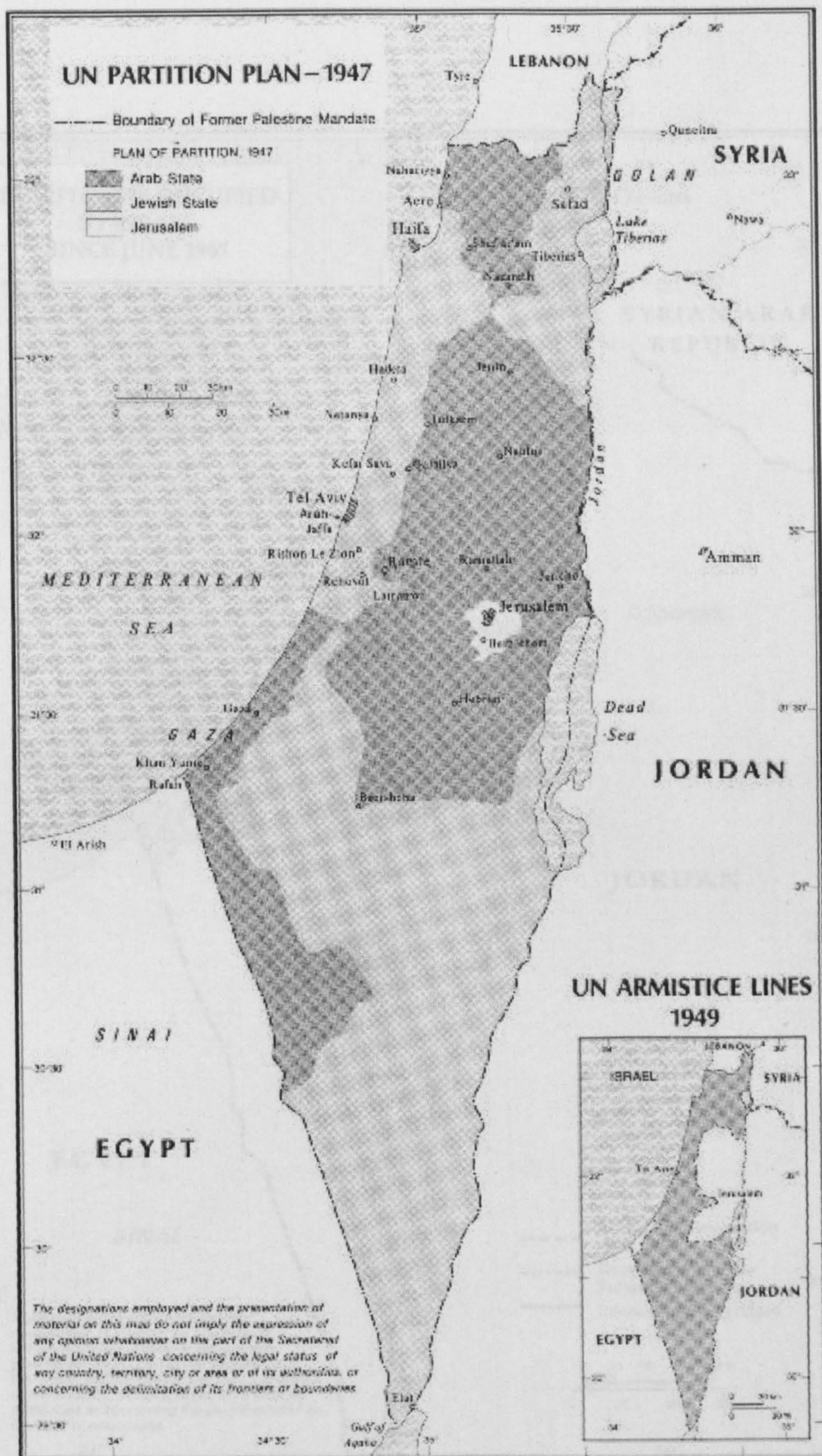
- *They were both very much the products of the times and histories that lie herein.*



¹ Lionel Jacobs participated in the 'Battle of Cable Street' (October 4, 1936) against the British Union of Fascists, and fought for the Spanish Republican Government in the civil war (1936-1939). A life-long Communist and non-political Zionist, Lionel was born in Hackney, East London, and is buried in the Jewish cemetery, Wilford Hill, Nottingham.

Front Cover: *'David'* (1623-1624) by Gian Lorenzo Bernini (b.1598-d.1680); commissioned by Cardinal Scipione Borghese. Galleria Borghese, Rome.

Source: http://www.artchive.com/artchive/b/bernini/bernini_david2.jpg





MAP SHOWING ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS
ESTABLISHED IN THE TERRITORIES
OCCUPIED IN JUNE 1967

- | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|---------------|----|-----------|-----|------------|----|
| ● Israeli settlements | <table> <tr> <td>Golan Heights</td> <td>34</td> </tr> <tr> <td>West Bank</td> <td>246</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gaza Strip</td> <td>33</td> </tr> </table> | Golan Heights | 34 | West Bank | 246 | Gaza Strip | 33 |
| Golan Heights | 34 | | | | | | |
| West Bank | 246 | | | | | | |
| Gaza Strip | 33 | | | | | | |
| ○ Town selected for reference purposes | | | | | | | |

The present work reflects information derived from formal settlements which can have contributed to the Special Committee to Investigate Human Rights in the Occupied Territories. The Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories.

The designation, expulsion, and the presentation of students on this page do not imply the acceptance of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Special Committee on the Situation of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning its frontiers or boundaries.

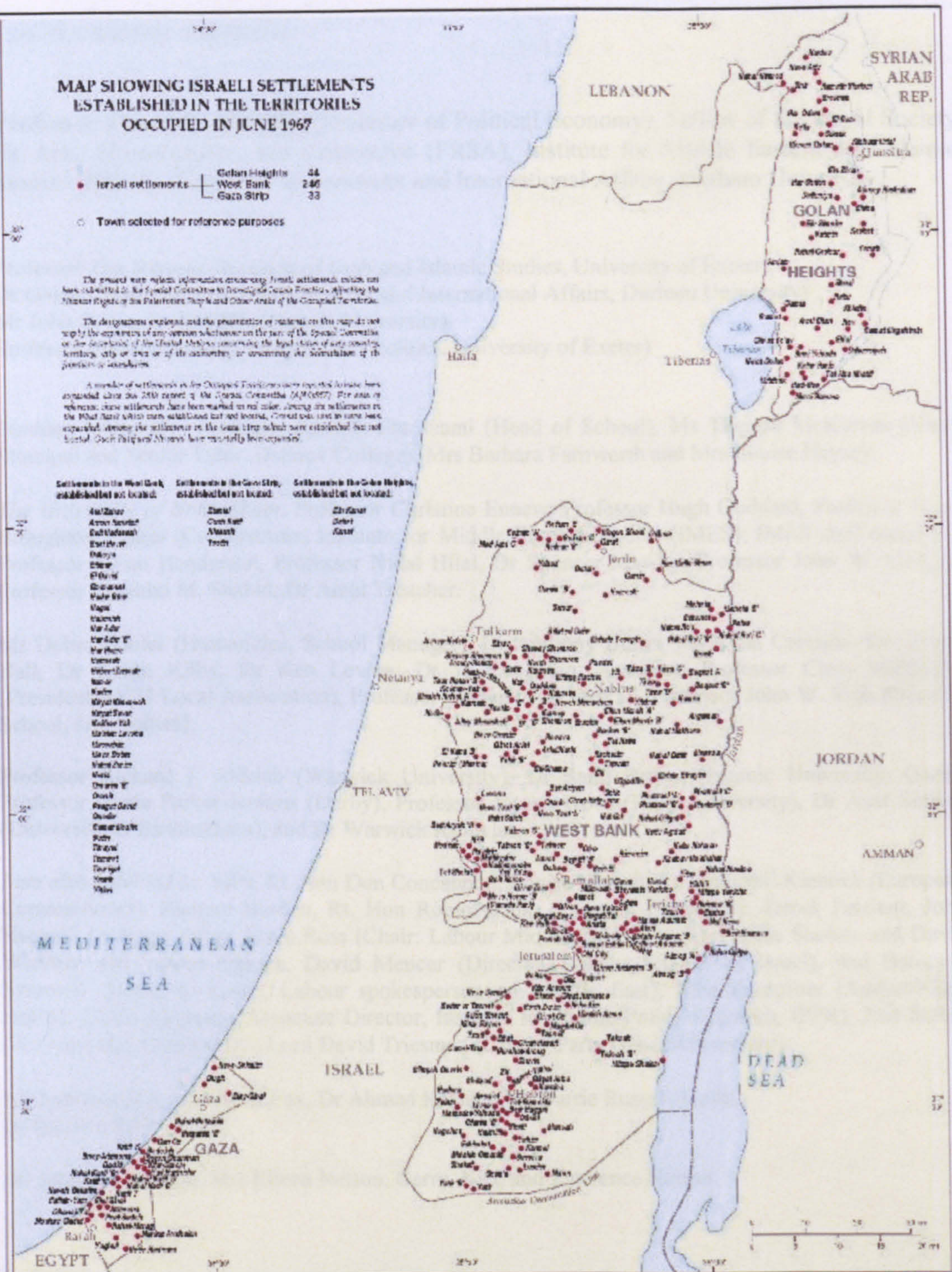
A number of settlements in the Occupied Territories were reported to have been attacked during the 2010 season by the Hamas Government (HAM) (57). The aim of the report, these settlements have been marked in red lines, showing the settlements in the West Bank which were established but not located, Central Bank and in some cases expanded, among the settlements in the Gaza Strip which were established but not located. Other figures and names have not been mentioned.

Settlements in the West Creek established but not located. Settlements in the Green Strip, established but not located. Settlements in the Golden Heights, established but not located.

[illegible]

Daniel
 Chris Kane
 Anthony
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23. 23.000
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Abstract

This thesis examines the basis and nature of the relationship between the British Labour Party and political Zionism. Specifically, it locates the decision-making process and policies of the British New Labour Party towards political Zionism and the Israel-Palestinian question, within the historical evolution of this relationship. This thesis demonstrates that this relationship is uniquely based on *common origins*, a *shared socialist ideology* and *related religious philosophies*, with the Labour Party historically demonstrating a pro-political Zionist tendency in its decision and policy-making trajectory.

However, a growing awareness within the Labour Party of the realities of both Palestine and political Zionism, in particular the consequences for the indigenous people, – the Palestinians, has presented key Labour figures, and the party generally, with an *essential dilemma*. The thesis argues that support for political Zionism has ultimately posed ideological and political contradictions for the Labour Party, whilst simultaneously presenting personal *psychological* dilemmas for key leadership and policy-making figures. The three dimensions of this *essential dilemma*, ideological, political and psychological, have combined in a process of progressive adjustment of the historical pro-political Zionist policy trajectory, towards a position of neutrality. This adjustment has been consistent through the old Labour and New Labour decision and policy-making eras, and therefore the policy of New Labour cannot be fully understood without reference to this historical evolutionary process. This neutral position has enabled the party to not only accommodate its traditional pro-political Zionism inclinations, which stem from the personal or psychological and ideological commitments of its leadership and constituencies, but also to avoid the full implications of *internal* and *external determinants* that might have otherwise divided the party.

‘For the Jew, the immediacy of his remote past is an intimate reality. He is living among places whose names are enshrined in his racial literature and they make sweet music to his ears. From Dan to Beersheba, he can now make a journey – Nazareth, Galilee, Jerusalem, all these and so many more belong to him in a special sense, for they whisper in his blood, and evoke memories of a time that was, before he was compelled to seek shelter in reluctant lands. When therefore the Arab says that the Jew should find a home anywhere except in Palestine he asks something the Jew cannot concede without mutilating his racial personality beyond endurance. It is no answer to say that many centuries have passed into history since the Jew was at home in Palestine. If he had been permitted the security of a safe home elsewhere, the answer might do. But, as we know, it was not so.’¹

Aneurin Bevan (January 1954) following his first visit to Israel.

‘We know that in Eternity exists a great world of truth, which here, in this falsity and confusion, is denied and obscured. And it is our business to set the whole living world into relation to the eternal truth. . . . We can at any rate begin the job. To finish it may be beyond us. But we must make a start, nevertheless. The success will be greater than the failure, however we fail, we shall be in closer relation to the Infinite Truth than we were.’²

D. H. Lawrence

¹ Foot, Michael (1973: 419) *Aneurin Bevan: A Biography, Volume Two: 1945-1960*, Chapter 10, *The Bevanites: II, 1953*, quoting, Aneurin Bevan, (London: Davis-Poynter)

² Lawrence, David Herbert [Editor: Paul Eggert] (1997: xlix) *Twilight in Italy and Other Essays, Introduction and Note on the Texts*, Stefania Michelucci, quoting, D. H. Lawrence, *The Lemon Gardens*, August 1915 version, (London: Penguin Twentieth Century Classics)



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Introduction

The origins of this thesis are located in undergraduate dissertation research conducted between June 1993 and May 1994³ into child casualties resulting from Israel's policies and activities in the Occupation Territories during the first Palestinian *Intifadah*⁴ (1987-1993). The conclusions of the dissertation brought to my attention two aspects of the role of the Israeli Labor⁵ Party in generating the *Intifadah* situation: its contribution to the establishment of some two hundred Israeli civilian settlements in the territories captured by Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War (in violation of international law); and the Labor Party's participation in a succession of coalition governments and central role in generating policies, which resulted in extensive civilian casualties. Against this background, the researcher was interested to learn in a speech by Margaret Beckett⁶ (Deputy Leader of the Labour Party) to the annual Labour Party conference (October 1993) of the close and protracted *basis* and the *nature* of relations between the British Labour Party and the Israeli Labor Party⁷ over many decades.

³ Nelson, Ian (1994) *Promised Land: From Dido to Goya's Paragon. Child Death and Injuries, Occupation and the Intifadah*, (Social Policy & Administration, BA Dissertation, The University of Nottingham), and Nelson, Ian (1995) *Middle Eastern Terrorism and Western Europe*, (International Relations, MA Dissertation, The University of Nottingham).

⁴ The *Intifadah* [Intifada] (in Arabic, a 'shaking-off') refers to the Palestinian civil uprising in the Occupied Territories (West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem) against Israel's occupation that began in December 1987 and continued until the signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993. See: Hunter, Robert F. (1991) *The Palestinian Uprising: A War by Other Means*, (London: I. B. Tauris), and, Nixon, Anne Elizabeth (1990) *Status of Palestinian Children During the Uprising, Part 1: Child Death and Injury, Volume 1: A Chronology, and Volume 2: Appendices*, (Swedish Save the Children: Radda Barnen)

⁵ The spelling of 'Labour' will denote the British Labour Party and labour movement (trades unions); the spelling of 'Labor' will denote labor Zionism, the Israeli Labor Party, and Israeli labor movement (trades unions).

⁶ Margaret Beckett (b.1943) MP: (Lincoln, 1974-1979), (Derby South, 1983-present); Foreign Secretary, 2006-2007.

⁷ Israeli Labor Party (Hebrew: *Avoda*) (Est. 1968) a centre-left social democratic, Zionist party; member of the Socialist International with observer status to Party of European

It was the combination of the key aspects of this undergraduate research, and the suggestion from a senior Labour MP that there exists a fundamental ideological and political contradiction between political Zionism and socialism, which determined the subsequent direction of this research. In a correspondence with Margaret Beckett, the question was raised as to how the British Labour Party, with its socialist ideology and principles, had formed and maintained a relationship with the Labor Party of Israel in view of the evidence that senior Labor figures had played a significant role in the settlement programme and the policies which had generated so many Palestinian civilian casualties. Beckett replied that the 'first' *basis* for the supportive *nature* of relations was the fact that the Labor Party of Israel was a 'sister Party in the Socialist International.'⁸

The question which then presented itself was how the British Labour Party had identified the political Zionist Israeli Labor Party as a sister party despite its complicity in actions that were clearly antithetical to socialist ideological principles. As the initial research evolved, it became clear that this was about Labour's relations with political Zionism as much as with the institutional manifestations of Zionism (either the Israel Labor Party or the State of Israel), since that relationship preceded either of the others, or largely facilitated them.

Political Zionism and Socialism: Defining an Historical Partnership

There are many forms of Zionism: political, religious, cultural, Labor, socialist, revisionist to name but some. They share the common theme of a return of Jews to the lands from which they were expelled two thousand years ago, but they vary greatly in their understanding of the logic and means of that return, and of the final objective. This thesis does not concern the various strands of *religious Zionism*, the faith-motivated belief in a return to await the fulfilment of biblical prophesy, nor the

Socialists. *Avoda* was an alignment and later merger of several left-wing parties, including *Mapai* (Land of Israel Workers' Party) and *Mepam* (United Workers' Party), both founded in the 1930s.

⁸ Beckett, Margaret (16.11.1993: 1) *Letter: Beckett-Nelson*, House of Commons

cultural Zionism of intellectuals like Asher Ginsberg⁹ who believed that ‘return’ was necessary principally for the spiritual recovery of the Jewish people after their prolonged period of Diaspora and oppression. Rather, it concerns the *political Zionism* which evolved in the late nineteenth century and which advocated the creation of a Jewish political entity - a state - in Palestine, based on the notion that the Jews were defined by being a nation (rather than an ethnic, cultural or religious minority). This belief, the best known advocate of which was Theodor Herzl,¹⁰ formed the basis for the founding of the Zionist Organisation in 1897 in Basle, and was operationalised through that movement (and the various organisations within it) as a manifesto for statehood. It is, in sum, a form of Jewish nationalism whilst at the same time being the *raison d’etre* for, and justificatory ideology of, the State of Israel.

If political Zionism identifies with particularist interests, it would appear to sit uneasily with the socialism of the British Labour Party, which upholds a universalist set of values. It is important at this point to determine what ‘socialism’ means to the British Labour Party, not least because its ‘New Labour’ manifestation suggested some evolution in the understanding of the term.

⁹ Asher Hirsch Ginsberg (Hebrew: *Ahad Ha’Am*) (b.1856-d.1927), Ginsberg emphasised the importance of Hebrew and Jewish culture in Palestine; born in Syvyra, Ukraine [Russian Empire], his 1891 visit to Palestine, recounted in *Truth from Palestine*, conveyed the realities of Palestine to the Diaspora: ‘all Arabs [Palestinians] are savages of the desert, a people similar to a donkeys,’ dispelling the myths of political Zionist propaganda that Palestine was empty, warning, ‘should the time come when the life of our people in Palestine begins to develop to such an extent that they will supplant the natives to a smaller or greater degree, then that people will not easily surrender its place.’ Shapira, Anita. (1992: 42-43) *Land and Power: The Zionists Resort to Force 1881-1948*, quoting, *Ahad Ha’Am, Al parashat derakhim [At the Crossroads]*, *Truth from Palestine*, Volume 1, p.28, 4 Volumes, Berlin, 1930, (New York: Oxford University Press)

¹⁰ Theodor Herzl (b.1860-d.1904) an Austro-Hungarian Jewish journalist widely recognised as the founder of modern political Zionism after the publication of his theoretical Zionist work *The Jewish State (Der Judenstaat)* (1896) expounding the establishment of a Jewish State as salvation from persecution, though controversially not necessarily in Palestine.

Throughout the history of the Labour Party, Labour and related figures have wrestled with the charge of defining socialism, and therefore what the Labour Party represents as a socialist party, and what Labour and related figures represent as socialists. The absence of a definitional consensus of socialism is important for many reasons: not least because for a socialist party it would, as Shaw argues, ‘make parliamentary government impossible unless it contained a . . . majority of members really clear in their minds as to what Socialism exactly means.’¹¹ Securing a working definition of socialism is not made any easier by the plethora of socialist theorists and theories. As the historian Harry Laider underlines:

‘He [the student of socialism] has vaguely heard about the “utopian socialism” of Owen and Saint-Simon, the “state socialism” of Schmoller and Bismarck, the “Christian socialism” of Kingsley and Maurice, the “scientific socialism” of Marx and Engels, the “Fabian socialism” of Shaw and the Webbs, the “revisionism” of Bernstein, the “guild socialism” of Cole¹² and Hobson, the “bolshevism” of Lenin and Trotsky. He has read somewhat, perchance, of the writings of Ramsay MacDonald, H G Wells, Karl Kautsky, William Morris, Anatole France and others who represent various aspects of the socialist philosophy. But he has little or no idea as to which schools are spurious, which defunct, which struggling for the mastery; what the difference between the schools are; what, if any, their underlying similarities.’^{13 14}

In Britain (as elsewhere) there is no shortage in socialist theorists or theories of socialism: some of the most eminently familiar socialist thinkers have assigned themselves or been commissioned to defining socialism on Labour’s behalf. The list

¹¹ Shaw, George Bernard (1929: xxix) *The Intelligent Woman’s Guide to Socialism and Capitalism*, (London: Constable)

¹² George D H. Cole 1889-1959 taught and profoundly influenced students Hugh Gaitskell and Harold Wilson at Oxford; Wilson joined the Labour Party as a consequence.

¹³ Laider, Harry W. (1933: v) *A History of Socialist Thought*, (New York: Crowell)

¹⁴ Robert Owen, 1771-1858; Claude-Henri de Rouvroy [Comte de Saint-Simon], 1760-1825; Gustav von Schmoller, 1838-1917; Otto von Bismarck, 1815-1898; Charles Kingsley, 1819-1875; Frederick Maurice, 1805-1872; Eduard Bernstein, 1850-1932; George Bernard Shaw, 1856-1950; John A. Hobson 1858-1940; remaining figures biographies in later text.

reads like a roll-call of intellectual, political and philosophical giants: John Ruskin, R. H. Tawney, Bertrand Russell, Leonard Woolf etc, all of whom represented 'different brands of socialism' and 'their own particular [socialist] philosophy.'¹⁵ The choice and adoption of a particular socialist theorist and/or theory of socialism has perplexed the Labour Party since its foundation to the present day. The nineteenth century theorist Fredrick Maurice viewed '*Socialism* of the modern world' as a vehicle of morality and equality possessing a religious scented power to 'lift the beggar out of his dunghill, that he may be an heir with princes' which he saw as being 'in some sort the peculiarity Christian truth.'¹⁶ A century later Maurice's spiritual connotations are far from lost amid the often recited claim that there is 'more of Methodism than Marx in British Socialism,'¹⁷ and the emphasis of Labour's and Britain's first woman cabinet minister - Margaret Bondfield¹⁸ - in 1911 that 'Socialism is not merely material. It has its spiritual aspects in the Fatherhood of God and therefore the brotherhood of Man'¹⁹ all muddy the definitional waters somewhat further.²⁰ In a

¹⁵ Laider, Harry W. (1933: v, vi)

¹⁶ McClain, Frank Mauldin (1972: 129) *Maurice: Man and Moralist*, Chapter 7, *The Nation: The Cultivation of Morality*, Memorandum, F. D. Maurice to Charles Kingsley, British Museum, Ms. No. 43621, (London: S.P.C.K.)

¹⁷ Smith, Leonard (1993: 11) *Religion and the Rise of Labour: Nonconformity and the Independent Labour Movement in Lancashire and the West Riding 1880-1914*, Chapter 1, *Introduction*, (Ryburn: Keele University Press)

¹⁸ Bondfield, Margaret (b1873-d.1953) MP: (Northampton, 1923-1924) and (Wallsend, 1926-1931); Minister of Labour, 1929-1931); in 1923 Bondfield, Susan Lawrence and Dorothy Jewson became Labour's first women MPs.

¹⁹ Bondfield, Margaret (1948: 358) *A Life's Work*, Chapter XVII, *There Shall Be Light* (1938-1941), (London: Hutchinson & Co.)

²⁰ Aside the hard political realities of inexorable Liberal decline, the basis for Methodism-Labour relations partly lie in the Nonconformist assertions that soul of the labourer was of equal importance in the eyes of God; that pulpits and pews alone were insufficient and inappropriate in an industrial society; and that Bible studies should not be restricted to the interpretations of priests, but accessible to all via universal education. Methodism-Labour relations have attracted substantial debate: conversely, it is attributed as having 'prevented political revolution' by retaining the general Christian doctrine of 'attributing suffering to the hand of Providence, and by preaching spiritual regeneration as the ultimate answer, the Methodist intellect emphasised the next-world rather than this, moral reform rather than

more applied secularist stance, Herbert Morrison is famously attributed for stating in the post-1945 period that 'Socialism is what the Labour government does.'²¹ However, as one commentator identifies, one of the problems with this general assessment occurs 'simply by shifting the emphasis in that statement, you can say one of two things: 1) a Labour government is, by definition, a government that will implement the classic ideas of socialism; or 2) the definition of socialism depends entirely on the Labour government that claims to be implementing it.'²² Of a later generation, arguably Labour's most revered intellectual and leading socialist theorist - Anthony "Tony" Crosland ²³ - widely viewed as 'one of the foremost figures in the post-war Labour Party'²⁴ and 'gifted beyond the reach of many of us'²⁵ also appeared to struggle to definitively define the meaning of socialism. In his seminal revisionist publication - *The Meaning of Socialism* (1967)²⁶ - Crosland states:

politics, and individual salvation rather than class struggle.' Samuel, Raphael (1981: 358) *Peoples History and Socialist Theory*, Chapter 43, *Religion, John Walsh, Methodism and the Common People, A Critique of Elie Halevy* (1924) *A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century*, Volume 1, *England in 1815*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul) And as an 'active and influential' two-way relationship via two 'disparate bodies . . . not only did Labour MPs become the main carriers of the nonconformist conscience They [the Methodists] also made a distinctive and important contribution to the development and ideals of the Labour Party.' Catterall, Peter *Morality and Politics: The Free Churches and the Labour Party between the Wars*, *The History Journal*, 36, 3 (1993), pp. 667-685, (New York: Cambridge University Press)

²¹ Beckett, Francis (2007: 243) *Clem Attlee*, Chapter 8, *Building Jerusalem*, (London: Richard Cohen Books)

²² Granville, S. (12 September 2007) A literary review of Dell, Edmund (1999) *A Strange Eventful History: Democratic Socialism in Britain*, (London: Harper Collins), <http://tobedwithatrollope.wordpress.com/2007/09/12/a-strange-eventful-history-democratic-socialism-in-britain-by-edmund-dell/>

²³ Anthony "Tony" Crosland (b.1918-d.1977) MP: (South Gloucestershire, 1950-1955), (Great Grimsby, 1959-1977); Foreign Secretary, April 1976-February 1977

²⁴ Jefferys, Kevin (2000: xiii) *Anthony Crosland*, (London: Politico's)

²⁵ Ibid., (2000: 221) *The Times*, February 22, 1977, *quoting*, James Callaghan, eulogy to the House of Commons, February 21, 1977

²⁶ Ibid., (2000: xiii)

‘If we are to formulate socialist doctrine, the first task is clearly to decide what precise meaning is to be attached to the word ‘socialism.’ This is not an easy question to answer. The word does not describe any present or past society, which can be empirically observed, and so furnish unimpeachable evidence for what is or is not ‘socialism’. Thus statements about socialism can never be definitively verified; and we cannot treat it as being an *exact* [Crosland’s emphasis] descriptive word at all. There is therefore no point in searching the encyclopaedias for a definitive meaning; it has none, and never could.’²⁷

Nevertheless Crosland did later conclude, in a 1974 publication, that within the revisionist section of the party at least, ‘Socialism . . . was basically about equality.’²⁸

In relation to the related movement for greater sexual equality it was also in the decades of the 1960s and 1970s that some prominent women socialist theorists, notably Labour related figure Sheila Rowbotham²⁹ in her key note pamphlet *Women’s Liberation and the New Politics* (1969), who argued that defining socialism had to be undertaken within the context of the cultural oppression of women in addition to the traditional economic and political terms of repression.³⁰

Given the apparent endemic problematics in defining socialism *per se*, and the fact that many Labour figures were, in the Robert Owen tradition,³¹ ‘socialist’ as a

²⁷ Crosland, Anthony [Tony] (1956: 64) *The Future of Socialism*, Chapter IV, *The Meaning of Socialism, II, The Confusion between Ends and Means*, (London: Jonathan Cape)

²⁸ Crosland, Anthony (1974: 15) Part One, *Essays on Socialism*, Chapter 1, *Socialism Now*, (London: Jonathan Cape)

²⁹ Sheila Rowbotham (b.1943) is a British socialist feminist and political historical writer.

³⁰ Sheila Rowbotham’s theories of socialist feminism are expanded in: Rowbotham, Sheila. Segal, Lynne & Wainwright, Hilary (1979) [Second Edition] *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism*, (London: Merlin Press)

³¹ The Welsh socialist philosopher Robert Owen (b.1771-d.1858) argued that the development of socialism generated as a result of individual and collective experience - as opposed to socialist theory - in his 1849 assertion that the ‘whole character is formed independently of himself,’ meaning people are entirely the product of their environments. See: Owen, Robert

consequence of their experience - and not as a result of theory and/or theorists, - this thesis therefore relies on the most consistent and extensively binding working definition of socialism - that contained and enshrined in the constitution of the Labour Party (which also reflects the most frequently identified principles located in the definitions of socialism by the majority of theorist and theories), - 'liberty,' 'social justice,' and 'equality').

The most relevant section of the constitution lies in Clause IV. This clause contains not only the important subject of the 'aims' of the party, but crucially (in terms of the assertion that Labour-Zionism relations represented an ideological contradiction), the stated 'values,' - the core moral and ethical principles and dimensions of the party. Clause IV was originally written in November 1917 by Labour's socialist theorist Sidney Webb (later Lord Passfield, 1929)³² - a revered figure particularly among the Fabian and intellectual sections of the party - and formally adopted in 1918. Clause IV and its 'aims' are among the most contentious aspects of Labour's constitution, particularly as Neil Kinnock's,³³ John Smith's³⁴ and Tony Blair's³⁵ Third Wayism was viewed as an rejection of socialism and socialist values, but also because it contained the original commitment to public ownership - nationalisation (state control of what Marx called the 'means of production'); government economic intervention (a reversal of the 'free market' - *laissez faire* doctrine); wealth redistribution (via fiscal policies); and state welfare provision (including health and education). However, the stated 'values' aspect has remained far less controversial and constant.

(1968 reprint) *The Revolution in the Mind and Practice of the Human Race; or, The Coming Change from Irrationality with a supplement 1849*, (New York: Augustus M. Kelly)

³² Sydney Webb [Lord Passfield, 1929] (b.1859-d.1947) MP: (Seaham, 1922-1929); Labour Chair, 1922-1923; Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, 1929-1930; Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1929-1931.

³³ Neil Kinnock (b.1942) MP: (Bedwellty, 1970-1983), (Islwyn, 1983-1995); Labour leader, 1983-1992

³⁴ John Smith (b.1938-d.1994) MP: (Lanarkshire North, 1970-1983) and (Monkslands East, 1983-1994); Labour leader, 1992-1994

³⁵ Anthony "Tony" Blair (b.1953) MP: (Sedgefield, 1983-2007); PM: 1997-2007; Labour leader, 1994-2007; June 27, 2007, became envoy for the 'Quartet on the Middle East' (UN, EU, USA and Russia) established in Madrid, 2002.

Blair's New Labour would dispute the suggestion that abandoning these core policies does not amount to a rejection of the core values. Indeed, even though Labour was originally composed from a raft of small socialist parties and societies, a direct reference to the term 'socialism' and/or 'socialist' in the constitution was not made until 1995; the party still explicitly identified itself as a 'socialist'³⁶ party in 2007. For New Labour, the 'aims' of achieving 'socialism' via 'socialist' policies were generally accepted: the founding 'values' of the party, as Tony Blair stated, were 'constant.' Blair was not however an adherent to socialist theory and/or a theorist, 'I am a socialist not through reading a textbook.' Rather, he considered socialism to correspond with the 'moral,' 'It stands for equality.'³⁷ Thus, we can argue that the founding and *continuing* values of the Labour Party are located in 'liberty' and 'equality' - social, economic and political justice, anti-exploitation, anti-exclusion, the party is non-revolutionary (anti-violence, though not pacifist). This is the socialism to which this thesis refers.

The title of this thesis might suggest to the reader that the intellectual attempts to reconcile socialism and Zionism would be the starting point and theoretical frame of reference. Various forms of socialist, Marxist and Labor Zionism exist (Labor is spelled without the 'u' when transliterated from the Hebrew), some of which eschew the narrow state-based nationalism of political Zionism, but many of which have found ways to accommodate universal class struggle with the Jewish national struggle and have consequently operated in collaboration with both the World Zionist Organisation and the agencies of the Israeli state (even holding government for prolonged periods of time). The key elements in this reconciliation have been the liberational aspects of political Zionism and the progressive features of socialist Zionism and the Israeli state.

³⁶ Labour policies: http://www.labour.org.uk/labour_policies

³⁷ Blair, Tony (06.07.1983) *Maiden Speech as MP for Sedgefield, House of Commons*, Hansard, 6th. Series, vol. 45, col. 316

Jewish socialism has its roots among Russian workers at the turn of the century, many of whom were initially drawn to non-sectarian Marxism rather than political Zionism. They formed clandestine trades unions (*Kassy*) which operated alongside non-sectarian unions but found themselves subjected to the anti-Semitism of both their fellow workers and the repressive state. For most of these early Jewish socialists, led by figures such as Karl Kautsky³⁸, the struggle lay in Russia rather than Palestine, religious and cultural forms of Zionism being eschewed as reactionary. Others, like Dov Ber Borochoy,³⁹ began to use Marxist reasoning to argue for transferring the Jewish proletariat to Palestine. Here Jewish proletarian action could both assist Jewish settlement *and* escape the constraints of European anti-Semitism whilst contributing to universal class struggle. Borochoy and his fellow socialist Zionist, Nachman Syrkin⁴⁰ (who argued that internationalism was the most desirable socialist outcome, but that in the meantime the phase of nation-statehood was a stage that had to be gone through, a necessary historical step, although not inevitably a capitalist or bourgeois enterprise) did not inspire mass movements, but their ideological ‘synthesis’ of socialism and Jewish nationalism did enable leftists to find a place in political Zionist movements, notably inspiring the founding of *Poale Zion*.⁴¹ Consequently a majority

³⁸ Karl Kautsky (b.1854-d.1938) a leading theoretician of social democracy, and promulgator of orthodox Marxism. Born in Prague [Austro-Hungarian Empire]

³⁹ Dov Ber Borochoy (b.1881-d.1917) a Ukrainian [Russian Empire] Marxist Zionist, founding figure in the labor Zionism movement and *Poale Zion*.

⁴⁰ Nachman Syrkin (b.1868-d.1924), a political theorist and founder of labor Zionism. Born in Belarus [Russian Empire] he was dedicated to synthesising socialism and political Zionism; while Syrkin’s seminal work *The Jewish Problem and the Jewish Socialist State* (1898) reflects his Jewish heritage, he argued political Zionism should replace Judaism.

⁴¹ *Poale Zion* (Workers of Zion) is a Jewish Marxist party founded in Russia (c.1900) after the rejection of political Zionism in 1901 by the *Bund*. *Poale Zion*’s political ideology is a blend of Marxism and Jewish Nationalism; the priority was the salvation of the Jews in a Jewish State in Palestine before the greater proletariat struggle. *Poale Zion* founded branches in London (1903/04) and Leeds (1905); close links with the trade union movement and Labour Party led to *Poale Zion*’s official affiliation to Labour in 1920. *Poale Zion* was re-named the Jewish Labour Movement in 2004.

of the Jewish settlers of the Second *Aliyah*⁴² (1904-1914) were socialist idealists from Russia and Eastern Europe. However, unlike their proletarian siblings back home, they were equally inspired by the moral virtues of manual labour and, in particular, agricultural occupation, which had frequently been denied them elsewhere. The harsh economic situation, the requirements of settlement, and the resistance of an indigenous population, forced *Poale Zion* to reformulate its Marxist ideology, favouring collectivism within Jewish communities rather than universalism in class struggle. Under the pressures of ideological dispute, the party fractured, the off-shoot *Hapoel Hatzair* placing Jewish national struggle above class struggle as the supreme value and the conquest of labour as superior to militarist conquest of Palestine. Nonetheless, together the socialist parties in Palestine inspired and managed the creation of the *Kvutzim*, collective agricultural settlements which dispensed with private property, established the equality of all members, and introduced worker management. These utopian communities became the flagships of socialist Zionism and became the basis for subsequent association between Jewish Palestinian, later Israeli, socialist parties and their European counterparts.

However, the intellectual efforts within Jewish socialism to reconcile itself with Jewish nationalism did not form the basis for the British Labour Party's early affiliation with political Zionism, as this thesis will demonstrate. Indeed, it is strange but true to say that very few Labour Party intellectuals really engaged with the debates at length (the notable exceptions being Harold Laski, and to a lesser extent Ramsey MacDonald⁴³ and Sidney Webb, to whom we will turn at a later point in the thesis). The moral values associated with the *Kvutzim*, the Jewish effort to emancipate itself from European bourgeois repression, and the romanticism of the settlement process as it was portrayed in an Orientalist, Christian Europe, were of far greater

⁴² *Aliyah* (Hebrew: Ascent) refers to Jewish immigration to Palestine and later Israel. The First *Aliyah* (1882-1903), Third (1919-1923), fourth (1924-1929) and Fifth (1929-1933) are used to denote periods of high immigration caused by pogroms, political persecution.

⁴³ James Ramsay MacDonald (b.1911-d.1937) MP: (Leicester, 1906-1918), (Aberavon, 1922-1929), (Seaham, 1929-1935), (Combined Scottish Universalities, 1936-1937); Labour Party leader, 1911-1914, 1922-1931; Foreign Secretary, 1924; PM: 1924, 1929-1931; born Lossiemouth, Scotland, the illegitimate son a farm labourer and housemaid.

importance in determining Labour's early support for political Zionism *and* the legacies which continue to shape New Labour policy today. Therefore, the thesis does not after all use the intellectual debates regarding the synthesis or otherwise of Zionism and socialism as the central focus of the study, although inevitably the contradictions which this poses for the Labour Party, Labour MPs, and Labour related figures⁴⁴ becomes increasingly important throughout the history of the Labour Party as greater awareness of the realities of Jewish colonisation and Israeli statehood for the indigenous Palestinians made its way into the consciousness of Labour MPs and related Labour figures.

A final note on terminology, then, is that in this thesis I will for the most part discuss the British Labour Party's relationship with political Zionism generally, but at times more specific discussion of socialist and Labor Zionism will be necessarily introduced. Christian Zionism is also introduced in so far as it relates to those individuals whose Christian faith draws its roots from a common biblical past and worldview with the Jewish faith, and who perceive Christian prophecy to be interwoven with Jewish fate and faith.

Literature Review

The research question for this thesis seeks to understand how New Labour's policy and decision-making reflected the party's understanding, and relations with, political Zionism, since policy provides the illustration or indicator of the party's perception of that relationship. Our starting point must be the existing literature and research which refers to this relationship, which can be divided into a number of genres.

The most obvious starting point would seem to be the extensive array of primary and secondary sources provided by Labour and related figures, and the more general studies of the Labour Party, and the party in the context of British politics and international affairs. This would be in addition to the literature with a more specific

⁴⁴ The term 'related figures' is used to denote people like Harold Laski, John S. Middleton and Michael Levy, for example, who never became Labour MPs, or, as in the case of Peter Mandelson, later became a Labour MP; the term 'Labour figures' denotes both Labour MPs and Labour related figures.

focus on Labour's relations with political Zionism and includes the seminal works of June Edmonds (May 1998, 1999 and 2000) covering the period 1967-1987 and the 1980s, Joseph Gorny⁴⁵ (1983) looking at the 1917-1948 period, and Paul Kelemen (January 1996, 1996 [two], 1998 and 2000) covering circa 1917-1948 and the 1980s. Further important contributions are provided by Fred Lennis Lepskin (1986), Jacqueline M. Linthwaite (1960) and Andrew Sargent (1980), in sum, incorporating the years from 1914 to 1949.

The importance of the historical perspective and narrative (noted during preliminary research interviews) in trying to understand the contemporary approach and position of New Labour and related figures to political Zionism is also firmly underlined in much of the academic literature. For instance, as Cline says in a review of Gorny's important 1983 study, 'his examination of the development of Labour's views on the question fills a distinct need.' But by accounting for the 'development' in providing the historical narrative and context belying the opinions of Labour figures in debates and contributions to policy-making in light of events and issues, Gorny's ideological and political survey makes that much more sense. As Cline again states, the historical content illustrates that Labour's 'responses were conditioned to some extent by attitudes and comments that had evolved over the years.'⁴⁶ In other words, even Gorny's brief concession to the wider historical narrative inevitably taps into the human psychological aspects seen in 'conditioned' 'attitudes' that helped shape responses and policy. This historical element is particularly important not just to reflect on the early dynamics that conditioned perspectives, but also because the careers of some key Labour and related figures spanned vast tracks of time, events and issue, frequently far beyond the parameters of the existing literature.

However, and reflecting the central flaw located in the relatively narrow periods of time explored by the existing literature, a more critical review of Gorny's work says, that although the work is 'the only detailed study of the views of British socialists in

⁴⁵ Joseph Gorny is occasionally referenced, Yosef Gorni.

⁴⁶ Cline, Catherine Ann *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 89, Issue No. 2, April, 1984, pp. 441-441, reviewing, Joseph Gorny (1983) *The British Labour Movement and Zionism 1917-1948*, (London: Frank Cass)

the Mandate era,' he 'concentrates overwhelmingly on party leaders and takes a strong pro-Zionist standpoint.'⁴⁷ A more general comment on the narrowness of the time-frame and subject focus relating to the historical developments and nature of those human perspectives is made by Vickers, who states, 'Research that does focus on Labour's foreign policy, . . . focuses on quite specific time periods, on individual administrations - in particular the 1945 Labour government - or on particular issues. None of the major studies of the Labour Party subject Labour's foreign policy to sustained analysis. Research that does provide any kind of overview is in desperate need of updating.'⁴⁸ Furthermore, 'foreign policy is in general an under-researched area of Labour Party policy and history. While there have been many studies of British foreign policy in the twentieth century, remarkably little has been said about the development, formulation and nature of the Labour Party's foreign policy.'⁴⁹

Although Vicker's study in foreign policy is quintessentially an 'in-depth political history' and does not profess or seek to determine the 'extent to which Labour's perspective was socialist',⁵⁰ some of its most important contribution to this thesis lies in that, while acknowledging it is 'not clear that the Labour Party ever had any socialist ideology as such',⁵¹ the study asserts the party has consistently offered an alternative approach to foreign affairs and policy-making via its internationalist credentials. Additionally, after paying tribute to the existence of 'different strands of internationalism'⁵² (within and outside Labour) the key assertion that 'internationalism has been the underlying basis of Labour's world-view and foreign policy' emulating from 'radical liberal thinking' and a 'Christian-socialist,

⁴⁷ Howe, Stephen (2007: 148) *Anitcolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1918-1964*. Chapter 4, *The Labour Governments, 1945-1951*, Part II, *Palestine and the Middle East*, [footnotes], (Oxford: Clarendon Press)

⁴⁸ Vickers, Rhiannon (2003: 2-3) *The Labour Party and the Wider World*, Volume 1, *The Evolution of Labour's Foreign Policy, 1900-51, Introduction*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press)

⁴⁹ Ibid., (2003: 1-2)

⁵⁰ Ibid., (2003: 4-5)

⁵¹ Ibid., (2003: 5)

⁵² Ibid., (2003: 6)

Nonconformist streak,'⁵³ in conjunction with the sheer historical scope of the work (1900-2004), allows a clear definition of what constitutes Labour's internationalism politically. Vickers links this definition of Labour's internationalism with the earliest periods of the party's approach to foreign affairs circa 1914 to 1939, with New Labour concepts like an 'ethical dimension' to foreign policy and the doctrine of humanitarian intervention, all of which are central concepts to this thesis.

As with the other major academic studies cited, Vickers does not diverge from the political and ideological aspects of foreign policy-making into the more personal, or what might be termed *psychological*, dimensions. This ideological and political focus is sustained by Kelemen as he explores foreign policy-making and the personal turmoil arising from Labour-political Zionist relations. Kelemen sets his enquiries on the 'ideological basis' and identifying the 'source of political support'⁵⁴ as he conveys the conundrum faced by Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald and related figure Harold Laski in 1929-1931 wrestling with policy-making while facing the emerging realities of political Zionism and Palestine, or similarly, Clement Attlee⁵⁵ and Ernest Bevin in 1945-1949. Moreover, although Kelemen recognises it is necessary to go 'beyond the inner circle of policy-makers' and into the 'ideological and political forces which influenced the party's understanding of the Palestine conflict'⁵⁶ there is no further exploration of the psychological influence.

While Gorny more than hints at the prospect of the role played by the psychological aspects in stating that relations were in part predetermined by a 'long-standing personal . . . contacts,' a 'special and unique bond'⁵⁷ and a 'socialist humanist

⁵³ Ibid., (2003: 5-6)

⁵⁴ Kelemen, Paul *In the name of Socialism: Zionism and European Social Democracy in the Inter-War Years*, International Review of Social History, Vol. 41, Issue No. 3, 1996, pp.331-350, p.331

⁵⁵ Clement Attlee (b.1883-d.1967) MP: (Limehouse, 1922-1950), (Walthamstow, 1950-1956); Labour leader, 1935-1951; Prime Minister, 1945-1951

⁵⁶ Kelemen, Paul *Zionism and the British Labour Party: 1917-1939*, Social History, Vol. 21, Issue No. 1, January 21, 1996, pp.71-87, p.71

⁵⁷ Gorny, Joseph (1983: xii) *The British Labour Movement and Zionism 1917-1948, Preface*, (London: Frank Cass)

tradition,⁵⁸ there is little further exploration or analysis as to what might comprise this tradition, its origins, or how this psychological aspect relates to the political and ideological factors, which are otherwise thoroughly examined. For Gorny, the relationship was not founded on 'general socialist principles' and the 'moral hypocrisy' and contradiction of 'ideological principles' occurred when Labour distanced itself from political Zionism in the early 1930s; but this was not the result of the psychological aspects, but purely political factors, 'a clear example of Machiavellian politics' and the 'parliamentary 'game.'⁵⁹ Similarly, while Edmunds more than adequately explores the ideological and political dimensions via a 'general question of party policy changes,' and 'sheds light not only on the intrinsically interesting issues of Labour's attitudes towards Israel,'⁶⁰ references to the what could be deemed the psychological aspects largely remain enveloped in an alluding style; although the account of debates on foreign policy-making highlights the fact that the Israel-Palestinian conflict has 'long been a source of dilemma for the left'⁶¹ of the Labour Party, the psychological aspects remain largely rooted on the opaque fringes of the studies or buried beneath the ideological and political features. In an similar vein Lepskin notes that while some Labour figures were 'more passionate'⁶² than other Parties and 'heart and soul committed to Zionism'⁶³ he dryly concludes that while Palestine and 'Zionism' remained for 'a few individuals and restricted circles within the party . . . a personal as well as political concern,' the 'bulk of the

⁵⁸ Ibid., (1983: 233)

⁵⁹ Ibid., (1983: xiii) *Preface*

⁶⁰ Edmunds, June *The Evolution of British Labour Party Policy on Israel from 1967 to the Intifada*, University of Cambridge, Twentieth Century British History, Oxford Journals, Vol. 11, Issue No. 1, 2000, pp.23-41, *Abstract*, p23, (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

⁶¹ Edmunds, June *The British Labour Party in the 1980s: The Battle Over the Palestinian/Israeli Conflict*, University of Kent, Politics, Vol. 18, Issue No. 2, May 1998, pp.111-118, p.111, (Blackwell Publishing)

⁶² Lepskin, Fred Lennis (July 1986: 45) *The British Labour Party and Zionism: 1917-1947*, Chapter 3, *Stability and Instability (1932-1936)*, (Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, Canada)

⁶³ Ibid., (July 1986: 39) Chapter 2, *First Political Crisis (1929-1931)*

membership knew little and cared less,'⁶⁴ but goes no further in accounting for the personal motivations and reasoning.

Of the major studies, it is Kelemen's that comes closest to exploring the personal motivations of Labour and related figures when he says that Labour's pro-political Zionism stems from 'strong emotional support' which reflects Labour's 'socialist humanist tradition.'⁶⁵ Kelemen quotes Gorny in asking, 'Through what ideological prism did the party view the Arab-Jewish conflict?' before answering that it was as a result of what Gorny identifies as the 'more human'⁶⁶ aspects, and rejecting Gorny's assertion that 'socialist humanism was the ideological basis of Labour's policy on Palestine,' claiming that it was a 'political judgement.'⁶⁷

Both Edmunds and Kelemen note the role of religion in Labour-political Zionist relations. Edmunds says that the historical source, and therefore the understanding of 'Labour's sympathy for the Jewish nationalist movement, [political] Zionism, stemmed from the traditionally strong political alliance between Labour and Jews.'⁶⁸ Kelemen quotes James S. Middleton in 'explaining his sympathy for Zionism recalled how scripture lessons imprinted on his generation the stories of the Israelites'⁶⁹ but neither delves further as to the origins of this related religious dimension amid the political and ideological factors. And even though references to leading figures like Harold Wilson and his influence in preserving the party's 'traditional loyalty to the Jewish state'⁷⁰ are often built into the studies, subsequent exploration and analysis is invariably rooted in the swirl of parliamentary debates amid war, and low-intensity

⁶⁴ Ibid., (July 1986: 44) Chapter 3

⁶⁵ Collette, Christine & Bird, Stephen [Editors] (2000: 142) *Jews, Labour and the Left, 1918-48*, Chapter 7, Paul Kelemen, *Looking the Other Way: The British Labour Party, Zionism and the Palestinians*, (Aldershot: Ashgate)

⁶⁶ Ibid., (2000: 142) Chapter 7, Paul Kelemen, *quoting*, Yosef Gorny, (1983) *The British Labour Movement and Zionism 1917-1948*, pp.188, (London: Frank Cass)

⁶⁷ Ibid., (2000: 142)

⁶⁸ Edmunds, June (May, 1998: 112)

⁶⁹ Kelemen, Paul (January, 1996: 73)

⁷⁰ Edmunds, June (May, 1998: 17)

conflicts, with the exclusion of the personal motivations and emotions that were at play and which this thesis includes and considers.

Among a cycle of histories, Nicholas Bethell (1979) presents a classic example of a limited time-frame (1935-49) but includes a significant section of the book in explaining the importance of ‘four thousand years of background.’⁷¹ But there is a noticeable absence of any detailed psychological account and analysis despite the ‘inescapable conclusion that expediency and personal emotion played a much greater part in determining the course of events’⁷² in Britain and Palestine. Additional studies are also confined by relatively limited time-lines, including Michael J. Cohen (1978) 1936-1945, Isaiah Friedman (1973) 1914-1918, Ilan Pappé (1992) 1947-1951, and Tom Segev (2000) 1920-1948, to name a few, and all with little more than a general reference to the personalities and their influences throughout.

A further point from which to build the basis of the thesis would appear to be located in a recently published swathe of books on the rise to power and premiership of the principal architect of New Labour, Tony Blair, and on foreign policy making under his leadership. These would include Richard Little and Mark Wickham-Jones (2000) (arguably the earliest analysis of New Labour’s foreign policy-making), as a collection of essays examining the ethical character of New Labour and assessing whether this has re-directed foreign policy from that set by the Conservative governments. Also the numerous works edited by Anthony Seldon, on Tony Blair (2004) and the New Labour governments (2001) and (2007), and the joint works on New Labour’s policy-making by Dennis Kavanagh and Anthony Seldon (1999), Anthony Seldon, Chris Ballinger, and Daniel Collings (2005), along with Anthony Seldon, Peter Snowdon and Daniel Collings (2007) publication, that combined provided a comprehensive understanding of the ideological development of Blair via ‘powerful individuals,’ and the political characteristics of New Labour in domestic and foreign affairs, in opposition and in government. As does Roger Liddle and Peter

⁷¹ Bethell, Nicholas (1979: 11) *The Palestine Triangle: The Struggle between the British, the Jews and the Arabs 1935-48*, Chapter 1, *The First Four Thousand Years*, (London: Andre Deutsch)

⁷² Ibid., (1979: Cover, Inside Front)

Mandelson (1996), Paul Anderson (1997), Stephen Driver and Luke Martell (1998, 2002 and 2006) and Steve Ludlam and Martin J. Smith (2004). John Kampfner (1998, 2007 and 2004) contributes a political journalist's perspective on Robin Cook, Blair and New Labour, with a keen emphasis on foreign affairs and policy-making, Paul Corthorn and Jonathan Davis [Editors] (2008), Karen E. Smith and Margot Light [Editors] (2001) give detailed analysis of the potential or actual instruments of ethical foreign policy-making, and the implications of the New Labour government for human rights, crimes against humanity, international law and humanitarian intervention.

These studies combined give a thorough grounding as to the origins of New Labour and the 1997 landmark election victory - the 'hand of history' - with a mandate to modernise, and the first Labour government for eighteen years (1997-2001). In addition to Seldon's collaborative works in particular, combining academics, historians, political journalists and commentators do much to explore and analyse the narrative, unearthing clues to Blair and New Labour's origins and approach in opposition and government. But for the most part, the Israel-Palestinian subject is understandably one among many subjects; the primary question focus is directed at an analysis of New Labour's policies and delivery record, overwhelmingly in terms of the domestic: education, health, law and order. Foreign affairs are incorporated, more often than not in examples of conflict, war, and the context of their significance to the domestic arena: 'globe-trotting at the expense of his domestic agenda.'⁷³ There is no doubt about the usefulness of Seldon for a comprehensive account of the inner workings and the complexities of the decision and policy-making mechanisms of New Labour, and an invaluable source into the background and philosophies of Blair. On foreign policy they are less clear: in part, the result of the low order allocated to foreign affairs generally, perhaps reflecting the lowly priority given by Blair and New Labour (Seldon, [Editor] 2001, has one chapter of twenty-eight on foreign policy, for example). On the specifics of the Israel-Palestinian question, while not unbalanced, they are nevertheless tilted somewhat: Seldon notes Blair's 'deep feeling for Israel,

⁷³ Seldon, Anthony. Ballinger, Chris. Collins, Daniel & Snowdon, Peter (2004: 506) *Blair*, Chapter 33, *9/11 and Aftermath, 2001-02*, (London: Free Press)

born in part from his faith'⁷⁴ and his awareness of the 'slums of Gaza.'⁷⁵ Generally the Israel-Palestinian issues are treated with a relative degree of knowledge and understanding, but also employs classic negative connotations: Palestinian statehood is captured in the metaphor of a boil, 'a sustainable state for the Palestinians, lanced,' terror is singularly a case of 'Palestinian terrorism against Israel,' there is no Israeli violence, only 'Palestinian violence,'⁷⁶ and the incongruous use of the term 'disputed territories'⁷⁷ when in international law no dispute exists, as they are defined as Occupied Territories.

Overall, Seldon's and his collaborative studies added a great deal of understanding about the origins and character of Tony Blair and New Labour in opposition and in government. The Kampfner and Wickham-Jones volumes and later editions fill some of the gaps in the jig-saw in terms of foreign policy-making and how that related to the ethical dimensions and concepts like humanitarian intervention, and in relation to domestic politics. However, despite their usefulness, the initial investigations of this thesis indicated a key weakness. As early as 1996, a number of Labour MPs and related figures who had encouraged my doctoral research proposal into Labour-political Zionist relations directed me first and foremost to the historical origins and development of relations. It quickly became clear that, for them, New Labour could only be understood in the context of an historical evolution of party and policy. It was evident from very early on that the contemporary relationship between the Labour Party and political Zionism has been profoundly determined by its historical roots and evolution, and that understanding the policies of New Labour was more about these historical roots, and the role played within their evolution by key individuals, than it was about any socialist ideological discourse or contemporary context. Current Labour MPs understand their own policy positions in this way, and this therefore seemed the appropriate starting point, and provided the framework for the thesis. This historical evolution was so fundamental that it could not simply be considered as

⁷⁴ Ibid., (2004: 506)

⁷⁵ Ibid., (2004: 500)

⁷⁶ Ibid., (2004: 618-619) Chapter 38, *George W. Bush*

⁷⁷ Ibid., (2004: 506) Chapter 33, *9/11 and Aftermath, 2001-02*

‘background’ to the current situation, or a context within which to place it, but was the key to explaining the current policies and position of New Labour, which are only the latest stage in an ongoing process, the whole of which requires full consideration.

A further possible starting point was thus the literature concerning the historical progression of debates within the British Labour Party over the correct understanding of, and response to, nationalism (political Zionism being a manifestation of Jewish political nationalism and, conversely, the reaction against it being that of Arab nationalism). We can draw a narrative of the evolution of these debates from a number of writers, principally, Christine Collette and Stephen Bird (2000), Ray M. Douglas (2004), Rhiannon Vickers (2003), Stephen Howe (2007), and John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith [Editors] (1994), Allan Warde (1982) and Peter Weiler (1993).

The debates within the Labour Party regarding Jewish nationalism - as expressed in political Zionism, - were generally not in isolation. The concept of nationalism *per se* was a problematic and contentious subject generating some difficult issues and questions for Labour as both a socialist and internationalist party; Labour’s debates on nationalism were, for the most part, securely located in the wider arena of foreign affairs and policy-making. As with nationalism itself, foreign affairs and policy formulation were also a source of vigorous debates and divisive policy decision for Labour.⁷⁸ While to an extent the traditional perception of Labour as primarily a domestic issues party still hold true, particularly in the period before 1914, it is also clear that the party was inextricably associated with wider world affairs by virtue of its internationalism, its membership of the Second International (1908), and simply by events and the responsibilities as a government. And although a significant section of Labourites retained their parochial isolationism, there existed a number of leading figures (notably Ramsay MacDonald) who were not only versed in the socialist theorist literature from many countries, but also experienced in travel, and possessing worldly perspectives that were firmly propagated from the earliest periods.

⁷⁸ It is argued that ‘up to the First World War, interest in nationalism was largely ethical and philosophical.’ Ozkirimli, Umut (2000: 12) *Theories of Nationalism: A Critical Introduction*, Chapter 2, *Discourses and Debates on Nationalism*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan).

Regardless of the positions of various Labour and related figures, the very history of Europe and the Labour Party is undoubtedly shaped by the development of modern nations and nationalism in foreign affairs. In 1900, the year of the party's founding, Britain was engaged in the Boer War (1899-1902); and it was another conflict that led to a radical shift in the party's thinking, as Thorpe states: 'The First World War marked a significant change in Labour attitudes towards the wider world. Put simply, the war proved that the latter was a potentially dangerous place that could not be ignored. Opting out was not an option. This was recognised by Labourites at all levels.'⁷⁹ Additionally, the three notable majority Labour governments (1945-1951 and 1997-2001/2001-2008) were all indelibly shaped by WWII and the divisions caused by the invasion of Iraq (2003). Furthermore, Britain's position as one of the leading industrial nations requiring the export of goods and the import of raw materials, and the strategic location on the edge of the Atlantic, the North Sea, the Channel, and within easy reach of the Mediterranean, reflected in an extensive maritime tradition, made further nonsense of the idea that Labour could remain singularly domestically focused, especially as a party of national government. There was also the fact that when Labour first assumed the office of government in 1924, Britain was in possession of an Empire encompassing a fifth of the globe and a fifth of its peoples, with encroaching competition from European and international rivals a pressing reality and responsibility. The net result of all these factors was that 'Therefore even if Labour had wanted to ignore the wider world, it would have found that the wider world would not necessarily ignore it.'⁸⁰ And yet however, there is, to this day, still something of a legacy of that domestic tradition in debates between a focus on domestic and/or world issues. Evidence of this legacy perhaps found, for example, in that few Labourites citing Labour's greatest post-1945 achievements would reference the party's role in creating the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) or the United Nations in the same vein as the National Health Service (NHS). Conversely, and perhaps reflecting another sea change in emphasis, how

⁷⁹ Corthorn, Paul & Davis, Jonathan [Editors] (2008: 6) *The British Labour Party and the Wider World: Domestic Politics, Internationalism and Foreign Policy, Introduction*, Andrew Thorpe, (London: Tauris Academic Studies)

⁸⁰ Ibid., (2008: 2)

many chroniclers will cite the marked reductions in child poverty, school class sizes and hospital waiting lists achieved by New Labour against the shadow of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan?⁸¹

As with a number of other 'isms' (pacifism, pluralism, internationalism) the Labour Party's position on nationalism was not straightforward. From the party's founding in 1900 to the period during and immediately after the 1914-1918 war, the British Labour Party was not entirely averse to nationalistic traits. As the historian Ray Douglas notes:

'The Labour Party's emergence in the aftermath of the Great War as Europe's leading champion of internationalist doctrine was neither a necessary, nor even a likely, consequence of its self-identification as a movement of the democratic left. To the contrary, the socialist tradition out of which Labour emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century was marked by a strong element of British nationalism . . .',^{82 83}

⁸¹ The approach of Labour to foreign affairs is invariably shaped by the components derived and located in the origins and history of the party. As Vicker's states: 'The Labour Party was born out of domestic discontent, and its policies – to a greater extent forged in opposition up until the 1940s – tended to reflect this. Because of these two factors, Labour's foreign policy reflected the party itself, the beliefs and standpoints of the various groups that came together to create it, and the dynamics between them, rather than necessarily the external world and experience and appraisal of international affairs.' ⁸¹ Vickers, Rhiannon (2003: 32) Chapter 2, *The main political influences on the development of the Labour Party's attitudes towards international affairs*

⁸² Douglas, Ray M. (2004: 14) *The Labour Party, Nationalism and Internationalism, 1939-1951*, Chapter 1, 'Half a League Onward': *The Labour Critique of the Nation State, 1900-39*, (London: Routledge)

⁸³ This nationalist marking is still evident: John Kampfner notes during the only Labour speech on foreign affairs in the 1997 election campaign, Tony Blair's reference 'I am proud of the British Empire' was only exercised at the last minutes. Kampfner, John (2003: 4) *Blair's Wars, Preface*, (London: Free Press)

One of the primary motivations for this perspective was the fact that ‘Few members of the British democratic left, moreover, considered foreign affairs to be more than a diversion from the real business of improving living conditions for the proletariat.’⁸⁴ It was, however, in the sobering aftermath of the industrial killing that characterised so much of the First World War that the narrow notion that the Labour Party could retain nationalistic tendencies was significantly amended; as Clement Attlee stated, the ‘most prominent feature in that back-ground is the consciousness of Britain’s insularity.’⁸⁵ And further, that while ‘Socialists in all countries are united by a common rejection of the doctrines and ideals of militarism and imperialism,’⁸⁶ as Attlee says:

‘Socialists were not really agreed on policy. There were those who rejected all national feeling, and sought to substitute for it allegiances to an international movement. There were others who thought rather in terms of the workers gaining control of the governments of their states and collaborating together as national units in a world commonwealth.’⁸⁷

However, while the debates about nationalism ensued amid sections of the party, after the early 1920s ‘. . . the mainstream of the Labour movement had swung round in favour of the ideal of an international government as the ultimate aim of socialist foreign policy.’⁸⁸ And the principal vehicle to achieve this aim was to be the League of Nations, with certain provisos: ‘The Labour Party committed itself to a ‘League foreign policy’ but also insisted that ‘The League must preserve its character of an association of governments as long as existing States retain anything like their present conception of sovereignty, and I fear they will do so for a long time.’⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Douglas, Ray M. (2004: 14)

⁸⁵ Attlee, Clement (1937: 119) *The Labour Party in Perspective*, Chapter VIII, *Foreign Policy*, (London: Victor Gollancz)

⁸⁶ Ibid., (1937: 119)

⁸⁷ Ibid., (1937: 204)

⁸⁸ Douglas, Ray M. (2004: 14)

⁸⁹ Sylvest, Casper *Beyond the State? Pluralism and Internationalism in Early Twentieth-Century Britain*, *International Relations*, 2007, Vol. 21, Issue No. 1, 2007, pp67-85, p.74, (University of Southern Denmark). Further complexities surrounding Labour and related

As Douglas says of the complexities of reconciling nationalism with socialist internationalism, the Labour Party having 'built up its foreign policy upon a firm foundation of internationalism,'⁹⁰ asserting that national sovereignty and nationalism itself were in the process of becoming extinct,'⁹¹ he concludes that 'In the closing years of peace, therefore, the Labour Party found itself impaled on the horns of an ideological dilemma - one that could be resolved only by abandoning internationalism altogether, or reformulating it in such a way as to permit its achievement by other than co-operative and consensual means.'⁹²

Debates within the Labour Party on internationalism and nationalism extended to the components of the party drawn from the trades unions and affiliated organs like the socialist Zionist Party, *Poale Zion*. Collette argues the basis of support for political

figures relating to nationalism and internationalism are noted by Sylvest: 'There is some evidence to suggest that 'nations', and to a lesser extent 'nationalism', carried positive connotations that made them compatible with internationalism, while patriotism slowly lost its progressive and radical associations and became tied to an uncritical attitude towards the state summed up in the phrase 'my country, right or wrong'. Thus, in the early 1920s internationalist could still maintain that the nation-state was the fundamental building block in any civilised form of politics. . . . both socialists and liberals had come to see the state domestically as a central arbiter performing a range of ordering functions. And order was arguably the key word in British politics at this tumultuous time. It was perhaps so for the Labour Party, which professed that its British version of socialism could achieve domestic political order without creating anything resembling the tyranny of the proletariat. By the early 1920s the distinct socialist pluralism of [George D. H.] Cole and [Harold] Laski had reverted to philosophical individualism, and this focus on the individual in turn oriented pluralism towards domestic political problems like poverty and education. International political questions were only treated tangentially.' Sylvest, Casper (Vol. 21, No. 1, 2007, pp.67-85, p.75-76)

⁹⁰ In this thesis the definition of 'internationalism' is that as prescribed by Douglas See: Douglas, Ray (2004: 5) and Vickers: 'Internationalism, broadly defined, is the desire to transcend national boundaries in order to find solutions to international issues.' Vickers, Rhiannon (2003: 5-6)

⁹¹ Douglas, Ray M. (2004: 1) *Introduction*

⁹² *Ibid.*, (2004: 15)

Zionism stemmed from 'the British Labour Movement's sense of internationalism, of worker's solidarity and sense of common identity transcending class consciousness.' As such, 'British Labour's internationalism was not anti-nationalistic, because workers' acknowledgements of class imperatives sprang from understanding their position in their own society and from their struggle for citizenship. James Middleton, Labour Party secretary, expressed it thus: 'The socialist does not substitute internationalism for nationalism, but building on a genuine nationalism, stretches out to socialists in other lands and seeks to build up a wider policy of internationalism.'⁹³

As confusing as Middleton's assessment seems, additionally, in the context of Labour's socialist internationalist ideology and principles, it was remarkable that what Collette calls a 'nationalist vision'⁹⁴ - political Zionism - found support among some Labour and related figures, affiliated organs like the trades union movement, and eventually, the Socialist International. In terms of equating the nationalism of political Zionism with socialist internationalism, Collette says: 'The controversy points both to the difficulty of understanding others' visions and to the complexities of the terms nationalism and internationalism when used by socialists,'⁹⁵ concluding in the period of the 1930s at least, 'the dichotomy of nationalism and internationalism was not resolved but glossed over.'⁹⁶

It is claimed that in the post-1945 era internationalism ceased to be a core ideological tenet for Labour, and more an article of faith. In the aftermath of the decline and fall of the league of Nations and the events of WWII, and the belief faltered that nationalism would evaporate as the world moved towards an ideal of a single world socialist government, the Labour Party once again embarked upon the task of defining

⁹³ Collette, Christine & Bird, Stephen [Editors] (2000: 72) Chapter 4, Christine Collette, '*Le soleil du socialisme commence a se lever sur le monde*' [The sun of socialism is beginning to rise on the world]: *The Utopian Visions of Labour Zionism, British Labour and the Labour and Socialist International in the 1930s*, quoting, James and Lucy Middleton's papers, Ruskin Collection, Ruskin College, Oxford, Middleton to Charles Irving, 'an ex-Tory voter', 12 April, 1929, MID 23/11.

⁹⁴ Ibid., (2000: 71)

⁹⁵ Ibid., (2000: 71)

⁹⁶ Ibid., (2000: 87)

how the traditional internationalist position of the party might be squared with the grim post-1945 realities. As a response, Labour opted to re-define the pursuit of internationalism in the belief that an array of international and supranational political institutions (United Nations, NATO, Commonwealth and European Economic Community, EEC) devised to acknowledge the post-1945 realities, could curtail the worst excesses of the sovereign nation state, while retaining the firm British identity and the solidarity of a national consciousness which had sustained the country through five years of warfare.⁹⁷

From circa 1919 to 1939, the mainstream of Labour's foreign policy-makers founded their approach on the traditional 'Liberal model of international society' (the predominant model of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries). A key concept of this philosophy is quoted by Douglas:

'This doctrine asserted that human beings were inherently specific; that they shared a common set of interests; and that conflicts between nations were in consequence a violation of the 'natural' order. The fact that wars nevertheless took place was explained in terms of an external defect in the international system - secret diplomacy, capitalist rivalry, the private manufacture and sale

⁹⁷ Although Labour's post-1945 foreign policy-making rested in part with the United Nations, opposition to such organs and policies still existed. While Laski and others conceded that 'socialism by itself would not eradicate the nation state' Lamb, Peter (1999: 332) such socialist voices and notions - as Anthony Crosland observed in 1956 - were in a nuclear super-power era 'like an echo from another world' Lamb, Peter (1999: 335): 'Instead of challenging the existing configurations of power within and between states, the UN, he argued, only confirmed both. 'We cannot rest content', he stressed in *The Crisis in Our Civilisation* 'until we have a genuine world government expressing, through the direct choice of peoples, in a parliament responsible to them, the will of the common folk, instead of being dependent, like the United Nations, upon the sovereign wills of nation states which express, in all vital matters, the purposes of their ruling classes and subordinate to those purposes the interests of the common people.' Lamb, Peter *Harold Laski (1893-1950): Political Theorist of a World in Crisis*, Review of International Studies, 1999, Vol. 25, 329-342. pp.334

of armaments, the scramble for colonies, or some combination of these factors - interfering with the normal harmonious pattern.'⁹⁸

Amid the disintegration of relations that was about to condemn Europe, and much of the globe, into the calamity of the First World War, and the benefit of hindsight, the decision by Labour's first generation of foreign policy theorists to set their stall on the international society model of Liberalism seems naive. Nevertheless, the emergent model of internationalism - what Douglas calls 'Whig internationalism' - fashioned by the post-1914 Labour theorists, distinguished itself by rejecting the concept of *laissez-faire* economics, viewed as a significant contributory factor belying the aggressive competition between sovereign states. Instead, advocating the pursuit and adoption of international laws to establish order and bring regulation to the hitherto conflicting interests, generated the 'open season' consequences of unfettered free-market capitalism. A further defining component feature would be located in the setting of the internationalist model of the British Parliamentary system of governance; after all, the case was argued, not only had the democratic socialists invested their political beliefs, but had not this single body *politic* exemplified its ability to unify disparate conflicting nations and peoples into a single entity? The British Labour Party's path to socialism, directed via the parliamentary system, was to be used as a model by which to achieve world governance via the forum of the League of Nations.

It was to be through the medium of the League of Nations - the 'Parliament of Man' - that the divisive competitive nature of sovereign nation states and related identification and loyalties of the peoples therein was to be superseded by a truly international organisation, with the result that nationalism would be replaced by a higher supranationalism.⁹⁹ However, it was the collapse of the League of Nations in 1939 that shook the core internationalist ideals underpinning some two decades of Labour's approach to foreign policy-making. Not only had the belief that internationalism and the related Woodrow Wilson doctrine of national self-

⁹⁸ Douglas, Ray M. (2004: 5-6), *quoting*, H. Butterfield, (1931: v) *The Whig Interpretation of History*, (London: Bell)

⁹⁹ For an expression of this internationalist doctrine based on the UK Parliamentary model in 1946 by Labour Prime Minister Clement Attlee, see: Douglas, Ray M. (2004: 6-7)

determination dissipated (both concepts widely considered to lead via independence to interdependency, and finally to a socialist international order located in the Co-operative World Commonwealth of Nations), but the catastrophic scale of the failure in the face of Japanese militarism, Fascism and Nazism, and the disintegration of states into open conflict determined a fundamental re-appraisal of Labour's foreign policy and decision making.¹⁰⁰

After the political disaster of the inter-war years and the grim aftermath of the Second World War, a sense of optimism surrounded Labour's election to government in July 1945, in the expectation that a socialist party might apply a socialist approach and agenda to foreign affairs. As Peter Weiler says:

'Labour took office in 1945 amid high hopes that its socialist message could be applied abroad as well as at home. . . . it was widely believed that, once on its own, Labour would play a different role in world affairs. *Let Us Face the Future*, the party's election manifesto, pledged to 'apply a socialist analysis to the world situation.' In fact, as has been frequently observed, the 1945 Labour government never considered whether a 'socialist analysis' could be applied to foreign affairs but maintained continuity with the policies of previous

¹⁰⁰ Labour's support for the League of Nations generated difficult decisions and radical policy changes. The League's decision to impose sanction on Fascist Italy in 1935 after the invasion of Abyssinia for example: 'Since the end of the Great War, and particularly in the peaceful international climate of the mid- and late 1920s, pacifism had fitted comfortably within the more loosely pacifist Labour Party. During those years Labour had consciously viewed itself as a party of peace with its overriding foreign policy objective as the achievement of disarmament. However, from 1933 the rise of Nazism . . . made it necessary for Labour to rethink its position. Arthur Henderson . . . worked to commit the party to collective security through the League of Nations. Nevertheless, until 1935 Labour's gradual endorsement of collective security sat uneasily with the position of the much-respected veteran pacifist, George Lansbury, as party leader.' Corthorne, Paul *The Labour Party and the League of Nations: The Socialist League's Role in the Sanctions Crisis of 1935*, *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 2002, pp.62-85, p.63

governments. In consequence, as we have seen, the government aroused much opposition among its own followers.'¹⁰¹

The idea that Labour would apply a socialist foreign policy had been reinforced by the efforts of a major Labour related socialist theorist figure, Harold Laski (National Executive Committee Chairman). Laski stated in the month of Labour's election to government, 'I want to emphasize that the Labour Party is at no point committed to the doctrine of continuity in foreign policy . . . because we have no interest in continuity of Conservative policy.'¹⁰² Nonetheless, in the wake of the cataclysmic failure of the League and the harsh post-1945 realities in Britain and across the globe, Labour made a fundamental reappraisal of its basis for foreign policy-making. What resulted is what Douglas calls, 'muscular' internationalism.'¹⁰³ The key reason being, as Douglas says: 'By the middle of the war, then, more and more Labour policymakers were arriving at the conclusion that the basic building-block of international society in the future was, and could only be, the Great Powers.'¹⁰⁴ The basis of the doctrine was to be the dominance of a few Great Powers; Britain, by virtue of its high moral authority (viewed to be derived from standing 'alone' against Hitler in 1940) and its democratic socialist and parliamentary traditions (not to mention a significant colonial power - a position and status Attlee and Bevin wished to retain), was to be among them. However, not only was there resistance to this concept from within the party, but Labour also grossly overestimated the degree of influence it derived from its moral credentials. Additionally, it overplayed its perceived value as a power residing somewhere between the excesses of capitalism and Communism. This overstating was particularly apparent in the near bankruptcy of the country and the near total financial reliance on the USA, at a time when Britain was still in possession of huge costly overseas territories with a pressing domestic agenda. The result was the rejection of the 'muscular internationalist' concept by

¹⁰¹ Weiler, Peter (1988: 189) *British Labour and the Cold War*, Chapter 6, *Manufacturing Consensus*, (California: Stanford University Press)

¹⁰² Ibid., (1988: 189), *quoting*, Harold Laski, *The Times*, July 3, 1945, cited by Fitzsimmons, *Foreign Policy*, p24, notes, p.43

¹⁰³ Douglas, Ray M. (2004: 8)

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., (2004: 9)

Labour as the economic leverage of the United States translated into an awesome political power that only gained greater currency with the onset of the Cold War. Furthermore, with anti-communism a majority position within the party, this effectively directed Britain and Labour to support unilateral policies emulating from Washington and the UN as a consequence.¹⁰⁵

Objections aside, the notion of power residing in the orbit of a few select states holding permanent authority over less powerful states to achieve collective security became the founding principle and structure of the United Nations. This selective power was primarily located in the supreme authority of the Security Council over the General Assembly, which was in essence what Labour figures like Clement Attlee and Ernest Bevin¹⁰⁶ envisaged despite resistance from related figures like Leonard Woolf and Harold Laski, who firmly argued such a position was a violation of socialist doctrine.¹⁰⁷ A core theme of this Anglo-centric ‘muscular internationalism’ was to be what Douglas describes as the following:

‘The powers demanded for the organisation thus included the ability to eliminate troublesome national minorities by transferring entire populations; to decide which states were viable and which were no longer consistent with the interests of ‘civilisation’; to regulate and where necessary override the domestic policies of national governments; . . . Within this ‘British-American world order’, the task of providing guidance and leadership to a European

¹⁰⁵ This U.S. leverage was particularly prevalent with regards to the political and economic pressure wielded by President Truman towards Clement Attlee and Ernest Bevin to grant 100,000 immigration certificates to Palestine for Jewish holocaust survivors.

¹⁰⁶ Ernest “Ernie” Bevin (b.1881-d.1951) MP: (Wandsworth Central, 1940-1950), (Woolwich East, 1950-1951); General Secretary, Transport and General Workers Union (T&GWU) 1922-1945, President, Trade Union Congress, (TUC) 1937.

¹⁰⁷ As the academic Howell argues, Attlee and Bevin’s favourable tendencies to nationalism extended further in that the ‘[Harold] Wilson governments emphasised bi-partisanship in foreign policy and had enduring attachment to nationalism and *real-politik* over a socialist foreign policy or even liberal idealism.’ Vickers, Rhiannon (2003: 3) *quoting*, David Howell, David (1976: 144-149/267-274) *British Social Democracy: A Study in Development and Decay*, (London: Croom Helm)

continent bankrupt physically and morally would fall naturally to Britain, which, according to the future Foreign Secretary, Herbert Morrison, combined greater political maturity than any other nation with a unique moral authority it had earned by its lone stand against Nazi dictatorship in 1940.¹⁰⁸

It was amid these extraordinary external circumstances and this kind of thinking - contradictory in terms of socialist ideology and principles - that allowed Labour to adopt the 1944 Post-War Policy Statement advocating the transfer - ethnic cleansing - of the Palestinian Arabs from Palestine drafted by Hugh Dalton,¹⁰⁹ approved by conference, Harold Laski and others, as a resolution to what they viewed as two 'troublesome national minorities' - one in the Middle East (the Palestinian Arabs), and one in Europe (the Jewish victims of Nazism).

Relatedly, there is a school of thought among Labourites that prefers, for ideological reasons, to portray Indian independence and the withdrawal from Palestine as having been conducted under the auspices of a negotiated plan in accordance with the securing of British strategic interests. As Warde notes, as a result in large part of its 'socialist traditions' the 'British Labour Party has always been divided' and is 'perhaps, subject to more contradictory restraints'¹¹⁰ when it came to the question of the empire and foreign affairs generally. In reality, Labour's departure from India and Palestine was early evidence of Britain's diminishing power, not muscularity, as the undignified hurried exits were clearly a response to two unsustainable and ungovernable situations. Concession to Indian, Arab and Jewish nationalism led to Labour seeking to retain its economic viability and world influence in the Middle East

¹⁰⁸ Douglas, Ray M. (2004: 8)

¹⁰⁹ Dr Hugh Dalton (b. 1887-d.1962) MP: (Peckham, 1924-1929), (Bishop Auckland, 1929-1931, 1935-1959); Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1929-1931, Chancellor, 1945-1947.

¹¹⁰ Warde, Alan (1982: 1) *Consensus and Beyond: The Development of the Labour Party Strategy since the Second World War*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press)

as a player with experience and in possession of bases in Aden, Egypt and the Gulf region and states.¹¹¹

However, it was the 1956 Suez debacle that was to prove the eventual catalyst which ended Labour's subscription to muscular internationalism and, with it, the belief that the remnants of Empire and Commonwealth as an organ of sovereign states had the ability to influence world affairs. Although Labour continued to place energy and resources into colonial development and the Commonwealth, Harold Wilson broke with Hugh Gaitskell's¹¹² anti-European credentials and re-applied for membership of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1967 (the same year Wilson announced the decision to withdrawal British forces from major bases East of Suez), with the result that the party increasingly directed its basis of foreign policy-making towards the EEC. It was also the appointment of the arch pro-European - Roy Jenkins¹¹³ - as Chancellor (1967-1970) and the distancing in British-US relations caused by the Vietnam War that opened the avenue to Europe for Labour from which the likes of David Owen - as Foreign Secretary (1977-1979) - would increasingly direct foreign policy issues, particularly those of the Arab-Israel conflict, with the potential that all its inherent historical legacies and problematics for Labour arising from the psychological, ideological and political aspects of the *essential dilemma*, would be diluted and shared in a European forum.

Although the debates concerning the role of internationalism and nationalism in foreign affairs and policy-making continued throughout the post-1945 era (as they had indeed persisted in the inter-war period), Vickers identifies what is argued to be the core principles of Labour's approach, located in the support for international organs:

¹¹¹ A crucial feature differentiating Labour policy towards Palestine from India is that in the case of India Labour was relatively free to determine policy; in Palestine it was restricted by the Balfour Declaration as enshrined within the terms and conditions of the mandate.

¹¹² Hugh Gaitskell (b.1906-d.1963) MP: (Leeds South, 1945-1963); Labour leader, 1955-1963; Chancellor, 1950-1951

¹¹³ Roy Jenkins (b.1920-d.2003) MP: (Southwark Central, 1948-1950), (Birmingham Stechford, 1950-1977); Deputy Leader 1970-1972, Chancellor, 1967-1970, Home Secretary 1974-1976.

‘While states operate within a system of international anarchy, reform of the system is possible because states have common interests and values. This change is only likely to be secured through the construction of international institutions with which to regulate economic, political and military relations between states. . . . states belong to an international community and that each state has a responsibility to work towards the common good of the international system, to work in the ‘international’ interest rather than purely in what it perceives to be national interests. . . . international policy and governance should be based on democratic principles and universal moral norms,’ that ‘collective security is better than balance of power politics’ and the ‘international working class and socialist solidarity’ derived ‘more directly out of socialist ideology.’¹¹⁴

Often, the net result of this amalgam of ideology and politics is, as Vickers concludes:

‘Feelings of kinship with workers overseas were engendered not only from socialist belief in the need for international working class solidarity but also from the impact of Nonconformist beliefs in the brotherhood of man. This led to concern with imperialism and of conditions in the British empire and, at times, support for nationalist movements and for national self-determination, which was often at odds with Labour’s belief in Britain’s continuing world and imperial role. Indeed, Labour’s policy on colonial affairs was usually confused and inconsistent.’¹¹⁵

Labour’s commitment to the concept of an internationalist community in its historical and contemporary approaches to foreign affairs and policy-making is illustrated by the incorporation of internationalism into the sacred text of the party - the Constitution. The effect of a constitutionally defined position is that for the most part Labour’s moral principles transcend the myriad of issues and concepts that have accompanied a century of Labour’s existence, securing the party’s support of the League of Nations and its successor, the United Nations (and by association, the principles of

¹¹⁴ Vickers, Rhiannon (2003: 5-8)

¹¹⁵ Ibid., (2003: 8)

international law). Despite a constitutionally defined position, in terms of foreign policy-making, at least two major aspects of foreign policy-making made Labour vulnerable with regards to its relations with political Zionism, as Vickers underlines: 1) 'foreign policy tends to be made in reaction to external events rather than as a result of internal policy development,' and 2) 'foreign policy is rarely made by bills passed through Parliament, and this tends to isolate it from the kind of scrutiny and legislative control that other policy areas are subject to.'¹¹⁶ Not only was the subject of political Zionism and Palestine troubling for Labour as a party, (individual Labour MPs and related figures), but for the left-wing of the party in particular (not least, because traditionally it was within the left-wing that many orthodox socialists resided, many of whom were also pro-political Zionism). As Stephen Howe stated, 'There has been no single international issue on which British socialists, and indeed socialists in all countries, have been more deeply divided than the question of Palestine.'¹¹⁷ Howe argues, however, that the dilemma has not been exclusively the preserve of the left-wing: 'Attitudes to Zionism and to the contending claims of Jews and Palestinians have cut across most of the conventional distinctions of left and right.'¹¹⁸ ¹¹⁹ One of the central reasons for this dilemma was that 'On the other hand, Zionism was itself in a literal sense a colonialist movement, establishing settlements in and claiming territory already inhabited by another people.'¹²⁰ On the other hand, Howe continues:

'There was also within the British left a current of support for Arab nationalism. In Palestine, however, support for Arab self-determination came into direct conflict with Jewish claims: two movements, each evoking principles central to the anti-colonialist ethos, appeared irreconcilable. No wonder that Fenner Brockway [Independent Labour Party], ordinarily more

¹¹⁶ Ibid., (2003: 2)

¹¹⁷ Howe, Stephen (2007: 148) Chapter 4

¹¹⁸ Ibid., (2007: 148)

¹¹⁹ Although the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) was also a deeply divisive subject for the Labour Party and the left-wing in particular, the relatively short duration of the conflict and the advent of WWII assured that it was consumed by subsequent events and issues.

¹²⁰ Howe, Stephen (2007: 149). Howe adds, 'Some at least of the early Zionist leaders themselves explicitly saw their project as part of the European colonial mission.' Howe, Stephen (2007: 149)

prone even than most British anti-colonialists to see decolonisation as a simple matter of right and wrong, confessed himself bemused by the Palestinian issue: 'To most problems one can apply general principles, but to Palestine - no. By no other question have I been so puzzled.'¹²¹

Howe points to further sources of the dilemma facing Labour and related figures from pro-political Zionism and Palestine:

'There were strong historical links between the Zionist lobby (many of whose leaders were themselves socialists) and the British labour movement. There was widespread sympathy for Jewish national aspiration on the left, compounded by admiration for the socialist experiments undertaken in the kibbutzim, the Histadrut (Jewish trade union federation), and Mapai and Mapam (the Zionist labor parties). Such feelings, generally stronger on the left than among Labour right-wingers, were given great impetus and urgency by the Shoah [Holocaust] and the post-war plight of European Jewish refugees.'¹²²

Additionally Howe states that, the 'Palestinian question divided the left on unfamiliar lines. The majority was swayed primarily by emotional sympathy with the sufferings of the Jewish people, by admiration for the socialist convictions of many Zionists (as opposed to the conservatism of much of the Arab leadership),' the result being a 'conviction that British opposition to Zionism stemmed from the desire to maintain British power in the region and from racism in the Foreign Office. These feelings outweighed suspicions aroused by US support for the Zionist cause, the exclusivist nationalism of the latter, concern for Palestinian Arab rights. . . .'¹²³

In addition to the 'feelings,' in other words the psychological aspects of the dilemma, generated in particular by Labour's empathy with socialist Zionism, what Garaudy

¹²¹ Howe, Stephen (2007: 149), *quoting*, Fenner Brockley (1942: 291) *Inside the Left*, (London: Allen & Unwin)

¹²² *Ibid.*, (2007: 149)

¹²³ *Ibid.*, (2007: 152)

disparagingly called a 'curious "Zionist socialism,"'¹²⁴ a further quandary for the left-wing arose as a result of the fact that the main publications of the left-wing - *Tribune* and the *New Statesman* were generally both pro-political Zionist: '*Tribune* and those closely associated with it, led by [Aneurin] Nye Bevan¹²⁵ and Jennie Lee,¹²⁶ gave very extensive coverage to the Palestinian issue from a consistently pro-political Zionist standpoint. The *New Statesman*'s treatment of the issue was less prominent and more cautious; but it too adopted a pro-Zionist stance as it had done throughout Kingsley Martin's editorship.'¹²⁷ It was also the case that the *Manchester Guardian* and the more commonly read, *Daily Herald*, took a largely pro-political Zionism stance. Even so, the debates within the left-wing, beginning in the 1930s, contained both pro- and anti-political Zionism arguments and positions. On one level, 'British socialists placed much hope in the prospect for a coming together of Arab and Jewish working-class movements' as the political Zionist enterprise improved economic conditions for Palestinians; while on another level, 'Some on the left believed the Zionist project to be in essence a tool of imperialism, encouraged by international finance capital.'^{128 129}

¹²⁴ Garaudy, Rodger (1983: 102) *The Case of Israel: A Study of Political Zionism, Part Two, From the Zionist Mythology to the Politics of Israel, I, Internal Policy: Racism, Israel as a Colonial Entity*, (London: Sharouk International)

¹²⁵ Aneurin "Nye" Bevan (b.1897-d.1960) MP: (Ebbw Vale, 1929-1960); Shadow Foreign Secretary, 1956-1959; Deputy Leader, 1959-1960. The son of Welsh Non-conformists - Baptist and Methodist - Bevan left school aged 13 to become a miner.

¹²⁶ Jennie Lee (b.1904-d.1988) [Baroness Lee of Asheridge, 1970] MP: (North Lanarkshire, 1929-1931), (Cannock, 1945-1970); Minister for the Arts (1964-1970) playing key role in founding the Open University; Lee was married to Aneurin Bevan (1934-1960). With Bevan, Lee first travelled to Israel in 1954 and saw what Foot called the 'whole stirring spectacle' (Foot, Michael (1973: 419) and as Lee says, 'especially the achievements of the kibbutz movement.' Lee, Jennie (1980: 197) *My Life with Nye*, Chapter 19, *Once More into the Wilderness*, (London: Jonathan Cape); Bevan viewed the Palestinian predicament in classic economic terms: 'The Arab knows how much help Israel gets from the outside. It is essential that he should also be able to call on the resources of the more advanced nations or in his resentment, like a modern blind Samson, he will pull down the pillars of his society about his own ears - and about ours in the process.' Foot, Michael (1973: 420)

¹²⁷ Howe, Stephen (2007: 151)

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, (2007: 149)

And even when the Labour leadership or government changed policy positions, the divisions and dilemmas continued. As noted in the post-1945 era, when political aspects of the dilemma began to gradually replace the ideological aspects: 'In general the sharpest criticism of the government's about-turn came from left-wing (and often Jewish) Labour backbenchers, led by Sydney Silverman,¹³⁰ William Warbey,¹³¹ Ian Mikardo,¹³² and Maurice Orbach.¹³³ These critics included individuals who, on some other foreign policy issues, attacked Bevin from positions near to that of the Communist Party of Great Britain. But on Palestine, whereas the Communists and their closest supporters within the Parliamentary Labour Party was predominantly anti-political Zionism, this left-wing group of MPs wholeheartedly supported partition and the Jewish demands. Others on the left, though, were by now having second thoughts.'¹³⁴ Arguably, the dilemma fuelling Labour's debates were assisted by the psychological aspects identified earlier in this Introduction, what Howe identifies as

¹²⁹ In 1930, the debates within Labour regarding the party's position on nationalism and in relation to political Zionism surfaced at the annual party conference, where a resolution establishing a 'new orthodoxy' designed to check questioning voices of concern caused by the alignment of socialist Labour with the nationalism of political Zionism was passed. At the 1929 conference the assertions of a leading pro-political Zionist Labour figure - John Middleton - that 'No enduring divergence of interests exists between the Jewish [political Zionism] and Arab [Palestinian] working populations in Palestine' and a general promotion of the concept that political Zionism was a form of socialism ensured the resolution was passed. As such, as Kelemen states: 'It embodied the central claim of Labour Zionism that Jewish nationalism in its socialist variant - which advocated that the Jewish working class take control of the economy through its trade unions and co-operatives - could embrace the interests of the Arab masses. It was, in other words, to be considered as a nationalism that had the virtues of class politics. This was the essence of the Labourist discourse on Palestine.' Kelemen, Paul (January 21, 1996: 77)

¹³⁰ Sydney Silverman (b.1895-d.1968) MP: (Nelson and Colne, 1935-1968)

¹³¹ William Warbey (b.1903-d.1980) MP: (Luton, 1945-1950), (Broxstowe, 1953-1955) and (Ashfield, 1955-1966)

¹³² Ian Mikardo (b.1908-d.1993) MP: (Reading/Reading South/Reading, 1945-1959), and (Poplar/Bethnal Green and Bow, 1964-1987)

¹³³ Maurice Orbach (b.1902-d.1979) MP: (Willesden East, 1945-1959) and (Stockport South, 1964-1979)

¹³⁴ Howe, Stephen (2007: 151)

‘personal contact,’ and the misinformation - ‘imperfect information’ - that combined to inherently advantage the political Zionists and disadvantaged the Palestinian Arabs, as an occidental cultural prejudice fermented among some Labour figures in favour of European derived political Zionism against the oriental Palestinians, as Howe further states:

‘The choices, which might necessarily have to be made on the basis of very imperfect information, would reflect prior patterns of personal contact as well as ideological considerations heavily coloured by British experience and alignments. This in turn meant that patterns of access to European languages, travel, education, and political ideas among colonials heavily determined their relations with British anticolonialists. Thus associates . . . were predominantly, followers . . . of Israeli Jews rather than Palestinian Arabs.’¹³⁵

It is hardly surprising, then, that from a multitude of infinitely complex and fluctuating factors surrounding the debates on socialism and nationalism, Howe concludes that the contradictions and dilemmas were generated as much by the complexities within Labour’s left-wing, and as a consequence, ‘A mould had been set, of bitter left-wing discord over the Middle East, which was to persist at least into the 1990s.’¹³⁶ Equally perhaps, it is not that surprising that a similar debate took place within the political Zionist movement as to what type of socialism and nationalism political Zionism should subscribe and aim to attain.

In an address to the Twelfth Zionist Congress of 1921, the theological philosopher and theorist of political Zionism - Martin Buber¹³⁷ - told delegates of the need to ‘guard the spiritual and moral integrity of Zionism in the face of the political complexities of building a National Home under the aegis of an imperialistic power and, especially, in the face of the resolute opposition of the Arab population of

¹³⁵ Ibid., (2007: 236-237) Chapter 6, *The Movement for Colonial Freedom, 1954-1964*, Part II, *Aims and Ideals*

¹³⁶ Ibid., (2007: 153)

¹³⁷ Martin Buber (b.1878-d.1965) a cultural Zionist and advocate of a bi-national resolutionist; born in Austria, Buber arrived in Palestine in 1938.

Palestine. Buber reminded the congress that there are distinct types of national self assertion, and that in attending to the just needs of the Jewish people, Zionism should be wary of assuming the posture of a self-righteous, egocentric nationalism. Such a posture, which he dubs 'hypertrophic' nationalism, he warns, would vitiate the very cure - the restoration of national dignity and spiritual renewal - that Zionism seeks to offer the ailing Jewish people. Moreover, a myopic preoccupation with the problems of one's nation invariably narrows one's moral consciousness, obscuring the humanity of other peoples, especially one's adversaries. The resultant exaltation of nationalism as morally self-sufficient principle distorts the original purpose of nationalism: to heal the afflictions on one's nation and thereby enable it to serve the higher ideal of human kind.'¹³⁸ And just in case there was any confusion, Buber stated further:

'What I am going to deal with is the unambiguous demarcation of a kind, a degenerate kind, of nationalism, which of late has begun to spread even in Judaism.'¹³⁹

What Buber's address illustrated was not just the complexities and weight of the situation in Palestine, Europe and Russia for the Jews, but also the question as to what type of nationalism the political Zionism movement should aspire to attain. As a Jewish non-Marxist socialist and political Zionist residing in Palestine, Buber was not only aware of the growing prominence of the more extreme strands of Jewish nationalists (revisionist Zionists) drawing support from events like the 1920 Palestine riots and Russian pogroms; he was also deeply conscious of the position of the British Labour Party - rapidly emerging as a major political force - to the Jewish nationalism embodied in political Zionism.¹⁴⁰ However, attempting to reconcile the nationalism of

¹³⁸ Mendes-Flohr, Paul [Editor] (2005: 47) *Martin Buber: A Land of Two Peoples: Martin Buber on Jews and Arabs, Editor's prefatory notes*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press)

¹³⁹ Ibid., (2005: 48)

¹⁴⁰ Buber was in close contact with Josiah Wedgwood who informed him of Labour's likely intension towards Palestine. Buber asks: 'What path do the men of the Labour Party advocate?' adding with a wry note that 'The Zionists . . . would deceive themselves if they believed a Labour government would view Britain's interests in Palestine differently. On the other hand, a Labour government would likely seek to hasten the policy of decolonisation of

political Zionism with the negative consequences for the Palestinians and Palestine was, as with many Labour and related figures, to occupy Buber until his death in 1965. Elie Kedourie claims that, 'Nationalists make use of the past in order to subvert the present,'¹⁴¹ citing the political Zionist's attempts to transform Judaism into a national identity, an undertaking not without its critics from within the ranks of religious Jews:

'One instance of this transformation of the past occurs in a letter written against [political] Zionism by an orthodox Rabbi of Eastern Europe in 1900. Dzikover Rebbe contrasts the traditional view which the community of Israel had of itself, and the new nationalist interpretation of the Jewish past. Bitterness gives his speech a biting concision, and . . . exhibits in a clear and striking manner the operations of nationalist historiography, as well as the traditional interpretation which it has challenged. 'for our many sins, writes the Rebbe, 'strangers have risen to pasture the holy flock, men who say that the people of Israel should be clothed in a secular nationalism, a nation like all other nations, that Judaism rests on three things: national feeling, the land and the language, and that national feeling is the most praiseworthy element in the brew and the most effective in preserving Judaism, while the observance of the Torah and the commandments is a private matter depending on the inclination of each individual. May the Lord rebuke these evil men and may He who chooseth Jerusalem seal their mouths.'¹⁴²

Concluding, Kedourie says that 'In Zionism, Judaism ceases to be the *raison d'être* of the Jew, and becomes, instead, a product of Jewish national consciousness.'¹⁴³ Additional perspectives on the array of nationalisms attributable and adopted by the

the imperial realm, allowing a great measure of self-rule in its colonies and territories.' Mendes-Flohr, (2005: 68)

¹⁴¹ Hutchinson, John & Smith, Anthony D. [Editors] (1994: 51) *Oxford Readers: Nationalism*, Chapter 8, Elie, Kedourie, *Nationalism and Self-Determination*, (New York: Oxford)

¹⁴² Ibid., (1994: 51) Chapter 8, Elie, Kedourie, *Nationalism and Self-Determination*.

¹⁴³ Ibid., (1994: 51) quoting, Israel Domb, (1958) *The Transformation: The Case of the Neturei Karta*, (London: Hamadfis)

political Zionists at various stages in the philosophical development of the movement are in evidence and cited. Maxime Rodinson wrote in 1973:

‘Zionism is an ideological movement of vast scope which has acquired a history that is already old and for which precursors can still be found. It has always taken many forms and has encompassed numerous divergent tendencies, as can be seen from even the slightest glance at its tormented and tumultuous history, at the schisms and splits it has produced, and at the fierce internal struggles that have marked it. In addition, as with any ideological movement, one must differentiate between ideal principles and variants that crop up in internal tendencies and with the passages of time, the implicit or explicit motivations of the masses of followers, the strategic and tactical plans of leaders, the fulfillment of these plans (which is always only partial and which always comes about in somewhat unforeseeable circumstances), the consequences of these plans, etc.’¹⁴⁴

The ‘Zionisms’ to which Rodinson refers are the various and numerous ‘nationalisms’ of the left, right and everything in between. He nevertheless concludes, ‘Yet overall characterization are possible’¹⁴⁵ by stating, ‘Only a minority of Zionist political leaders sincerely and resolutely set as their goals the bi-national state, equally balanced between two ethnic groups,’ adding, ‘the Zionist leadership only accepted it with the intention of getting round it, of using it to set up a situation that would some day make inevitable the emergence of this Jewish state that was always in their thoughts but never (officially) on their lips.’¹⁴⁶ The net consequence of the tussle within the Zionist movement as to what brand of nationalism would best suffice the agenda for Palestine was officially adopted in 1942 at a meeting at the Baltimore Hotel New York, and it was the extreme type of revisionist Zionism that was sanctioned by the political Zionist leadership.

¹⁴⁴ Rodinson, Maxime (1980: 36) *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State? In What Way is Israel a Colonial Phenomenon?* (New York: Monad Press)

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., (1980: 36)

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., (1980: 61)

As the literature shows, the debates on nationalism and political Zionism among Jewish and Gentile Labour and related figures certainly preceded those referenced by Howe, and even those of Buber. Several studies examine the debates and dilemmas encountered by British Jews and respective communities. For example, the academic historian Rubinstein says that nationalism and Labour-political Zionism relations were not without tensions as Labour MPs and Jewish communities 'found their loyalty seriously strained,' not least, by events in 1945-1949 when Attlee and Bevin were considered to be working 'actively against Zionist aspirations in Palestine' and 1956, after 'Hugh Gaitskell's condemnation of the Suez invasion'¹⁴⁷ initiated by Israel. Loyalties were also strained elsewhere: Labour's left-wing, traditionally the most supportive political section, was also struggling with the realities of Jewish nationalism in relation to socialism. As David Cesarani states: 'With few exceptions, the Left [including Labour] utterly rejected Jewish nationalism in the form . . . of Zionism.' Concluding, that much of the support that had existed was maintained: 'As long as Israel appeared to embody left-wing aspiration, this ambivalence was latent. Once Israel departed from its socialist trajectory and in effect demanded acceptance for what it was, and not what the Left hoped it might become, the trouble started. While mainstream old left grudgingly accommodated itself to Israel's existence, the far left and New Left saw no redeeming features in Israel.'¹⁴⁸ And one of the reasons for that arising position, as Gershon Shafir says, lies in the fact that, 'At the outset, Zionism was a variety of Eastern European nationalism, that is, an ethnic movement in search of a state. But at the other end of the journey it may be seen as a late instance of European overseas expansion, which had been taking place from the sixteenth through the early twentieth centuries.'¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Rubinstein, W. D. (1982: 18) *The Left, the Right and the Jews*, Chapter 1, *The Pattern of Jewish History, The Jewish Community in Britain*, (London: Croom Helm)

¹⁴⁸ Cesarani, David (2004: 79) *The Left and the Jews: The Jews and the Left*, Chapter 11, *Conclusions*, (London: Labour Friends of Israel)

¹⁴⁹ Shafir, Gershon (1996: 8) *Land, labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict 1882-1914, Introduction. Settlement and Nationalism*, (California: University of California Press)

A collection of academic papers (Collette and Bird, 2000) gives a much broader perspective of the debates on socialism, internationalism, nationalism and colonialism within Labour and the trades union movement, and Jewish communities. If nationalisms were problematic for Labour, the added dimensions of Jewish and Judaic histories and experiences were to add further complications. As Collette and Bird state: 'It was natural that not only were Jews inspired by, but that they initiated revolutionary and socialist ideas; not only did they participate in, but they led the early left-wing movements. Their messianic culture and their constant experience of religious oppression made such ideas more meaningful to them. Not all were [political] Zionists by any means and to many this nationalistic concept contradicted the very basis of socialism.'¹⁵⁰ This predicament was particularly notable in the British Jewish communities caught between the conflicting and rival interpretations of histories, and ideological concepts.

What Douglas, Howe, Vickers and others provide are various accounts of the events and debates of what amounts to two narratives: one is about policy-making and policy; and the other is about colonialism. They provide a clear, chronological investigation and analysis of the ideological and political aspects comprising Labour's historical difficulties equating concepts like internationalism with nationalism and colonialism. But they add very little by way of answers to the understanding as to why the contradictions are resolved in the way they are by analysing the role played by the backgrounds, experiences and motivations of the Labour and related figures concerned. As such, the ideological and political aspects are arguably incomplete, as is the account and the resulting understanding.

Key sources which can help explain this dimension of the historical relationship between the Labour Party and political Zionism is the plethora of diaries, memoirs, and autobiographies of key Labour figures. These include the extensive diaries of Tony Benn, Barbara Castle, Richard Crossman and Hugh Dalton (edited by Ben Pimlott), a dozen volumes of memoirs, including George Brown, and those of key Jewish MPs like Ian Mikardo, Sydney Silverman, Emanuel Shinwell, Greville Janner

¹⁵⁰ Collette, Christine & Bird, Stephen [Editors] (2000: 1) *Introduction*

and Gerald Kaufman. A significant array of academic studies have captured many key Labour and related figures, including biographies of Harold Wilson (Ben Pimlott, 1992), Harold Laski (Issac Kramnick and Barry Sheerman, 1979), and Alan Bullock's definitive three volume biography of Ernest Bevin (1960, 1967 and 1983); Kenneth O. Morgan covers the lives of Labour *Leaders and Lieutenants* from Keir Hardie to Neil Kinnock (1987), and in more detail, James Callaghan (1997) and Michael Foot (2007), as well as the wider history of the Labour Party (1984).

Of course, each individual manuscript or volume of diaries offers insight only to the period in which the individual concerned was engaged with Labour Party politics. All manner of considerations are required in their inclusion and the analysis and conclusion, not least their accuracy. However, collectively they can give an insight into the motivational or personal dimensions in terms of understanding the role played by factors such as career jealousies and dislikes, degrees of relevant experience, or not, as the case may be, as well as their limitations in terms of perspectives (frontbench and backbench status, for example), and simply ignorance. A fine example of this psychological element and its influences is the fact that Aneurin Bevan's firm pro-political Zionist stance had as much to do with his 'ambition and jealousy'¹⁵¹ as it did with socialist ideology because, as Hugh Gaitskell says, 'his actions are determined far more by emotional reactions, particularly anger and pride'¹⁵² - in this case, his intense personal dislike of Ernest Bevin.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Williams, Philip M. (1979: 165) *Hugh Gaitskell: A Political Biography*, quoting, Hugh Gaitskell, Chapter 6, *Minister of Fuel and Power*, (London: Jonathan Cape)

¹⁵² Ibid., (1979: 333) Chapter 11, *Foreign Affairs and the Disintegration of Bevanism 1954-5*, quoting, Hugh Gaitskell, Diary, a. October 6, 1954

¹⁵³ Aneurin Bevan's authorised biographer, Michael Foot, says 'He [Bevan] was almost a Zionist' by early 1954. Foot, Michael (1973: 419); Foot attributes Bevan's 'abiding friendship for Israel' as a consequence of his relations with Israeli Labor figure Yigal Allon (b.1918-d.1980) and British businessman, Israel Sieff (b.1889-d.1973). Foot, Michael (1973: 546) Chapter 14, *Suez, 1956-1957*. Patricia Hollis, Jennie Lee's biographer, says it was Israel and Rebecca [Becky] Sieff 'from whom Nye and Jennie learnt their Zionism.' Hollis, Patricia (1997) *Jennie Lee: A Life*, Chapter 7, *Life with Nye*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

Alternative approaches (other than socialist discourse or historical survey) were considered. Initially, given that this was a thesis about policy, I examined various approaches to policy-making, specifically foreign-policy since political Zionism reflects an external concern. However, these could offer little to a study which covered a party, rather than a government, and did not provide explanatory frameworks which could include internal party dynamics, British Parliamentary system issues *and* the impact of Israeli/Palestinian dynamics at any given point in time. Moreover, the type of data which was available served to shape the method ultimately adopted.

Methodology

Given the merits and limitations of the bodies of literature discussed above, the method ultimately chosen for this thesis was therefore to locate contemporary policy within an historical framework. Labour relations with political Zionism clearly go back to the earliest days of the party, and have ideological, political and personal/psychological dimensions which all need to be explored as evolutionary rather than static phenomena, not least because the fortunes of both the Labour Party and political Zionism have altered over time. The relatively limited periods of time covered by the existing literature is a key factor restricting knowledge and therefore an understanding of relations. The detailed accounts and analysis provided in these time-frames is, for the most part, therefore, restricted to including the events, issues and questions surrounding the party and those Labour MPs and related figures within what are essentially snap-shots of whoever happens to be in the frame at the time. And while this can generate a general sense, the literature does not provide an account and analysis of all the personal motives of the key Labour and related figures as they developed over time, which is an important, if not crucial factor in attempting to understand the basis and nature of Labour-political Zionist relations.

It also quickly became clear from the literature that there has never been within the Labour Party single, clear, unitary ideological position on political Zionism and that to focus only on intellectual debates within the party would be to ignore the greater part of the relationship's tangible existence. It was equally clear that focusing primarily on policy-making mechanisms and party institutions would ignore the crucial part played by the personal interpretations and prioritisations of the individuals

who pressed for specific policies. Although the literature gives an account of the intellectual debates and the practical politics, and while this is often accompanied by numerous references to the 'human motivations' the 'emotional' and 'personal' factors that hint at the existence of a more personal response and reasoning behind the ideological and political aspects of relations, there is very little by way of account and analysis as to the consequences of these personal characteristics and motivations in terms of the actual personalities from which they originate, particularly in terms of their ability to influence Labour colleagues and indeed, at times, Labour positions and policy.

Thus, whilst at various times both the ideological debates and political practices are introduced in the thesis, the main focus is on the key figures who, in the absence of a coherent, unified, ideological position on political Zionism, intervened to steer the party in directions dictated by their own personal ideological, psychological and political persuasions, whether that be the more orthodox pro-Israel approach of Harold Wilson, or the more pragmatist pro-neutralist one of Neil Kinnock, for example.

As has been said, considerable attention has been given to the eras before *New Labour*, since New Labour policy-making has, in many demonstrated ways, been a continuation and consequence of the historical legacies left by previous generations as they sought to respond to the momentous events of their time. It has been argued, above, that precisely because New Labour's relationship with political Zionism is not *solely* ideologically based, but also draws upon the psychological and political inheritances of old Labour, it cannot be extracted out of the historical context, a context which has been continuously and progressively shaped over an extended period, and whose roots have relevance even today. The consequence of this has been that, structurally, the thesis may seem overly lengthy on the historical aspects of policy-making, and the reader is asked to understand New Labour as a contemporary manifestation of the Labour Party, and not as a new phenomenon. Again, this is a contestable proposition but which the researcher thinks justified by the arguments and evidence presented later in the thesis.

In covering the historical period, and in attempting to examine the key roles played by individuals in shaping policy in the absence of a unified ideological party position which might have been manifested in more official party documents, the thesis was forced to rely heavily on biographies, autobiographies, diaries, memoirs, letters and speeches of Labour MPs and related figures; monographs detailing Labour Party history and policy in specific epochs, the Labour Party's own publications, manifestos and annual conference reports; and the texts recorded in Hansard of Parliamentary debates. In order to cross-check the data from these sources with current understanding within the party, and also to provide new data on the very contemporary (New Labour) era, the researcher sought additional material, including a questionnaire distributed to all Labour MPs and a series of interviews with Labour MPs and Labour related figures.

It can be argued that neither autobiographies nor biographies offer objective historical data: in both cases the past is interpreted for the reader, usually with a view to presenting the subject in either a particularly favourable or a specifically critical light. Autobiographies in particular often represent a writer's justification of their own past. It is possible that political figures will seek to enhance their own role in affairs, or to avoid exposing themselves to searching criticism where their actions were less admirable. They are also selective in what they chose to present as important information and what they leave out. Thus the reader may be drawn into a process of selectivity and prioritisation of data. Political figures might also be swayed in constructing their narratives by outstanding loyalty to their party, or the government of which they were part, although for the most part the autobiographies used were composed once individuals were retired or out of office and therefore such constraints were less than they might have been. Nonetheless, autobiographies are essentially subjective texts and have to be regarded in that light.

Relying on biographies and even some historical accounts can present similar problems. For example, a biographer or historian chooses his or her subject because a judgement has already been made regarding the importance of the subject and its virtues (or vices). Around half the biographies used here were written by individuals themselves affiliated with the Labour Party or the individuals they were profiling. Thus, their interpretations are also biased by political perspective and personal view.

Filtering out these biases in the material is a challenging task for the researcher. Nonetheless, these sources provide a crucial 'inside story' which has not been previously examined or evaluated in its entirety. They are written by individuals who are in unique positions in terms of their access to information and their capacity to interpret it, at crucial times and in informal, as much as formal, locations for the relationship to be manifested. The thesis will show how personal preferences, beliefs, antagonisms, jealousies, career competitiveness, and interpretations of events were crucial in determining Labour Party relations with political Zionism and policy responses to events, things which simply would not have been visible if the thesis had approached the question from the perspective of published intellectual debates or institutional policy-making processes only.

Questionnaires and Interviews.

Richard Burden's¹⁵⁴ assertion that 'it may prove difficult to get enough detailed information'¹⁵⁵ proved, in the first instance, to be the case in relation to an interactive questionnaire sent via email to each Labour MP (hard copies were posted to MPs with no email). Although accompanied by a supporting cover note from David Treisman (Labour Party General Secretary) requesting a response, only five from over 400 MPs responded. Of the reasons given, constituency and parliamentary time and demand factors, a policy of not responding to questionnaires, and the sensitivity of the subject were frequently cited for non-participation.¹⁵⁶

On the basis of a poor response and the reasons cited, it was decided to abandon the questionnaire and focus instead on a series of interviews. Initial requests for interviews fared little better: from thirty requests only David Watkins, Richard

¹⁵⁴ Richard Burden (b.1954) MP: (Birmingham Northfield, 1992-present); chair of the Palestine All-Party Parliamentary Group, and has twice held the posts of Parliamentary Private Secretary (PPS) between 1997 and 2001.

¹⁵⁵ Burden, Richard (30.01.1997: 1) *Letter: Burden- Nelson*, (House of Commons)

¹⁵⁶ Although support for the questionnaire was secured from David Treisman the Parliamentary Labour Party was under formal instruction not to respond to un-approved questionnaires to prevent the reoccurrence of responses being interpreted as reflecting Labour policy.

Burden and John Heppell¹⁵⁷ (the researcher's constituency MP) were forthcoming. Heppell agreed to ask personally six Labour MPs and related figures of the researcher's choice to participate in an interview; only after further direct contact did further Labour MPs and related figures agree to be interviewed. In the case of Neil Kinnock and Robin Cook this took over six months of negotiations and organisation via private secretaries and intermediaries. Although the primary problem was the other commitments of the interviewees, once again, the subject matter proved highly sensitive. The researcher was aware that interviewees would a) be eager to present themselves in the best light, b) be wary of committing themselves to an (unknown) person on such a politically sensitive subject and, c) be obstructed in some cases from full disclosure while a member of a serving governing party. Material gained from interviews was therefore treated with appropriate regard for the need for corroboration.

Interviewees were chosen on the basis of the following:

- a) Their current or previous official positions within the party and the degree to which this offered them access to information and key discussions. In particular, individuals who held key posts at key points in time within party and/or government.
- b) Their known interest in, and position on, political Zionism, Israeli-Palestinian politics, and Middle Eastern affairs. A balanced mix was sought of individuals favourable to one side or the other.
- c) A balanced mix of front and backbencher MPs.
- d) Individuals who have worked or currently do work for the Labour Party on a consultancy or advisory basis.
- e) Individuals who have worked or currently work for lobby groups (either for Israel or for the Palestinians/Arabs) in Westminster.
- f) Representatives of the Palestinian and Israeli embassies in London (the Israeli ambassador declined).
- g) Journalists with specialisms in this field.

¹⁵⁷ John Heppell (b.1948) MP: (Nottingham East, 1992-present); Vice Chamberlain of the Household, 2005; Government Whip, 2001, 2005

The researcher paid particular attention to ensuring a balance was secured in the overall number of people from the political Zionist or anti-Zionist camps who were interviewed. Nevertheless, to a degree the interviewee sample was self-selecting by virtue of the willingness or unwillingness to take part, and was not sufficiently large as to represent a statistically significant sample. It was not, however, the intention of the interviews to provide that kind of information.

The interviews were semi-structured, principally to allow for the diversity of their various roles and positions to be fully explored, but also because the nature of the subject meant that they were often keen to pursue particular lines of discussion over others, and some flexibility was needed. All interviews were one-offs, lasting approximately one to one and a half hours. They were all tape recorded with the interviewees' permission, and a transcription was offered (but in no case was this offer taken up). The interviews with MPs variously took place either in their Westminster offices or constituency offices. Interviews with other individuals took place in their organisational offices/workplaces. Although it is possible that more informal environments might have added incrementally to the willingness of interviewees to engage with sensitive aspects of the discussion, it was the researcher's impression that this was unlikely a significant factor and that interviewees had already made up their minds about what they would and would not say.

It was undoubtedly the case that the interviews were shaped by the interviewees' own sensitivities to the issues under discussion. There was a general reluctance to discuss some issues: for example, current Labour MPs were reluctant to comment negatively on current government policy, or on fellow colleagues, particularly since at the time when the interviews were taking place it still seemed that a final peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians might be forthcoming (2002-2005). Some interviewees insisted on the questions being submitted prior to interview; others refused to answer some questions on grounds of sensitivity and/or the desire not to be quoted publicly. However, the interviewees were often willing to discuss issues often in great detail but strictly for 'background purpose.' It was very often difficult to direct the interview under these circumstances.

The most evident limitation of the questionnaire/interview data arises from the relatively small number of Labour MPs prepared to participate in either the questionnaire, or in an interview. The only way this factor could be circumvented was by targeting figures who were both senior and held relevant position in the Labour Party and/or government (Neil Kinnock, Robin Cook and Baroness Symons), and who had not generated biographies, diaries or other such sources. The limitations were also bypassed by securing further contacts from the interviewees that led to additional interviews and correspondences that were conducted by email, letter or telephone. Despite all these problems, the final list of interviewees and the data gained from them was, in my belief, fairly reflective of the issues under discussion.

Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is constructed in two parts. The first part (Chapters 1-4) provides the necessary historical account of the Labour-political Zionist relationship for which this introduction chapter has so far argued, dividing the period from the establishment of the Labour Party in 1900 until the creation of New Labour in 1994 into four consecutive periods. These have been determined according to identifiable stages in the evolution of both the Labour Party itself and the Zionist project and its consequences). These are by no means simple demarcations to make, and it is acknowledged here that there are overlaps and continuities which traverse periods. However, at some point practical decisions had to be made as to what they demonstrate and conclude.

The second part of the thesis addresses the era of New Labour, by drawing upon the information gathered and the lessons learned in previous chapters. Thus its format is slightly different, in so far as one chapter is devoted entirely to the issues surrounding the party leadership of Tony Blair himself, while a second addresses the Labour relationship with political Zionism. The specific objectives of each chapter are as follows.

Chapters One, Two, Three and Four identify and draw out the significance of understanding policy-making in terms of a trajectory rather than a final objective, at least in the case of political Zionism and the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Secondly, they demonstrate the existence of an *essential dilemma* posed for the Labour Party, which

arises from the contradictions between a largely pro-political Zionist consensus formulated on the back of perceived *common origins, related religious philosophies* and *shared socialist ideologies* and the emerging realities on the ground in Palestine and later Israel (which included the dispossession and suppression of an indigenous peoples, the Palestinians). The thesis demonstrates that the *essential dilemma* was primarily but not exclusively ideological, and that it cannot be understood without reference to the psychological dimensions which arise for individuals out of the perceived *common origins* and *related religious philosophies*. Moreover, the political aspects - the need for key Labour MPs and related figures to respond to political realities arising from events and status as opposition or governing party - needs to be taken into account as well.

Thirdly, they indicated the importance of key individuals in shaping policy, as they moved to fill the void left by the absence of a clear and consistent ideological position which could accommodate both pro-political Zionist empathy and socialist ideology. Finally, it was not only key individuals but also the events and developments - both within the party itself and in the broader national and international environment - which served to shape party policy. In the chapters these are identified as *internal* and *external determinants*.

Chapters Five and Six apply these strands of understanding to the era of New Labour. Chapter Five focuses in depth on Tony Blair himself as the architect of New Labour and its foreign policy, while Chapter Six examines the implications for party policy towards political Zionism, and the Israel-Palestinian question.

The thesis concludes that New Labour under Blair has pursued a policy trajectory in favour of negotiated compromise, in effect continuing a process of deviation from the party's early adamantly pro-political Zionist policy trajectory. However, there remain within the party, and particularly within the leadership, political Zionist consistencies that carry over from the historical old Labour era into New Labour and which act to direct that trajectory away from a genuine resolution of the *essential dilemma* which has plagued the Labour Party for over a hundred years and which presents itself in the contradictions between an historic empathy with political Zionism akin to a family

relationship on the one hand, and Labour's socialist and humanitarian ideological principles.

In sum, the thesis asserts that the *essential dilemma* is a psychological, ideological and political condition located in British Labour Party and related figures, resulting from unique factors in their relationship with political Zionism. This condition is composed from three core aspects, which also form the *basis* and *nature* of the British Labour Party's relationship with political Zionism. The three core aspects are psychological, ideological, and political. While these three core aspects are distinctive in themselves and possess distinctive components, they also share common components and characteristics, and as such they relate, influence and interact with each other. The source of the three core aspects and their respective components are primarily located in what this study refers to as the *common origins*, the *related religious philosophies*, and the *shared socialist ideology*. The details of the components comprising the three core aspects are as follows.

1) The psychological aspects are essentially derived from the *common origins* which are composed of numerous factors that are shared by Labour and political Zionism; these include the emergence of the Labour Party and political Zionism in the late 1800s and early 1900s, with the founding principal objective of furthering the social, economic and political position of a designated section of British society, the working classes (Labour), and the Jewish community (political Zionism). Additional factors include the common histories, backgrounds, locations, predicaments, exclusions, persecution, exploitations, deprivations and experiences of the working classes and Jews. Further psychological commonalities stem from the *related religious philosophies* (Christianity and Judaism) which occurs primarily between Labour's Christian socialists and the link political Zionism makes with Judaism and Palestine (the Christian Holy Land). Although religion was an important common factor in the emergence and development of both the Labour Party and political Zionism, there were significant differences of emphasis: while Judaism was a keystone of political Zionism philosophy (in that Jewishness was an essential qualification, and the central aim of political Zionism was to establish a 'Jewish' entity in Palestine via 'Jewish' immigration and settlement), religion was not a tenet of Labour Party ideology, objectives or membership, although Christianity, notably in the shape of Christian

socialism and a significant contribution from Methodism, was a consistent factor in Labour's identity and development. Further components emanated from an amalgam of organisational and personal factors: organisationally, the Labour Party had numerous Jewish MPs, non-Jewish Labour and related figures had Jewish colleagues and constituencies with sizable Jewish communities located in major cities from London, Manchester and Glasgow which in small or large part supported political Zionism; more personally, key figures - Herbert Morrison, Hugh Gaitskell and George Brown - for example - though Gentiles, married Jewish partners.

2) The ideological aspects are principally derived from the *shared socialist ideology* located in the stated socialist identity, aims and principles of the Labour Party, and the socialist sections of the political Zionism movement (*Poale Zion, Mapai, Mepham, and Avoda* - the Labor Party of Israel). Apart from the shared socialist ideology Labour and political Zionism share additional related socialist components such as affiliations with trade unions and their umbrella organs, the Trade Union Congress (TUC) and the political Zionism equivalent, the *Histadrut*, the co-operative movement and the *kibbutzim*; and on a broader international perspective, the Socialist International and the Zionist Organisation.

3) The political aspects are largely derived from the fact that both the Labour Party and political Zionism are in the first instance political movements. The political aspects came into increasing significance as Labour developed into a party of government (1924 and 1929-1931), elevating Labour from the political fringe of opposition to a position of higher influence, and ultimately national and international power; relatedly, relations were increasingly influenced by political aspects as Labour governments were required to produce policies that accounted for British national and strategic interests as well as those of the party's socialist ideology. An international political dimension was imposed by the empire, the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine for which Britain was responsible (1920-1948).

Although the earliest period of relations with political Zionism were largely free of controversy, they were ostensibly based on ignorance, misconceptions and misinformation (emulating from political Zionism's propaganda), along with elements of cultural prejudice and expediency, which resulted in the intrinsic contradiction

located in Labour's socialism, and political Zionism's specific type of nationalism generally being submerged. However, the *essential dilemma* condition expanded and accelerated as the emerging realities of political Zionism (as a colonial, para-military nationalist organ) and Palestine (as possessing an indigenous population comprising Christians, Jews and Muslims) emerged during the inter-war years (1918-1939) to expose the ideological and political contradictions these realities represented for the socialist Labour Party and related figures, and thus the *basis* and *nature* of Labour-political Zionism relations; this became increasingly prevalent during the periods when Labour was the party of government (1924, 1929-1931, and 1945-1951), but the continuity of the *essential dilemma* has remained throughout (circa) a century of Labour-political Zionism relations.

Thus, this thesis further asserts that not only is the psychological aspect of seminal importance in itself - in terms of understanding the *basis* and *nature* of Labour-political Zionism relations, - but that it is also an integral factor influencing the remaining core aspects. The omission of an in-depth investigation and analysis of the source and influence of the psychological aspect also makes the resulting conclusions and understandings of the ideological and political aspects, and the relationship generally, incomplete. Ultimately, New Labour's foreign policy-making and relations with political Zionism - the Labor Party of Israel - cannot be understood in abstraction, without reference to this historically evolving but still unresolved *essential dilemma*.

Chapter 1

Historical Era: 1900-1944

Common Origins, Related Religious Philosophies, Shared Socialist Ideology and the *Essential Dilemma* (1900-1944)

Introduction

This chapter identifies and accounts for the origins, sources and evolution of the *essential dilemma*. This *essential dilemma* is understood to be a psychological, ideological and political condition which exists among British Labour Party MPs and related figures, resulting from unique factors in their relationship with political Zionism. The origins and source of the *essential dilemma* condition are located in the psychological and ideological aspects and components. The psychological aspect arises from the perceived *common origins* and its primary element, the *related religious philosophies* (Christianity and Judaism), and the ideological aspect that stem from the perceived *shared socialist ideology* of Labour and sections of the political Zionist movement. Both the psychological and the ideological aspects defined the initial *basis* and *nature* of relations between Labour and political Zionism. The evolution of the *essential dilemma* occurs with the emerging realities of both Palestine and the nationalistic para-military and colonialist characteristics of political Zionism amid the consequences of these realities for the Palestinians; particularly as these realities posed a contradiction for Labour's socialist identity and principles, thereby forging a contradiction in terms of sustaining the close and supportive *basis* and *nature* of Labour's relations with political Zionism.

As such, the *essential dilemma* is principally - but not exclusively - an ideological dilemma. The chapter shows, however, that the concept cannot be understood as an ideological dilemma alone, but that there are important political aspects to the dilemma (particularly as Labour assumes the office of government), and significant

psychological dimensions which are at times more prescient than the strictly ideological and/or political dimensions.

The chapter offers an account of the Labour Party's early responses to political Zionism, in addition to the events which shaped the *basis and nature* of relations in the period nearing the end of WWII. The chapter demonstrates how these early responses were predicated on the perceived *common origins* of Labour socialism and political Zionism. These *common origins* stimulated a deeply emotional as well as an ideological affinity between the members of the respective movements which shaped Labour Party and related figures responses to political Zionism, Palestine, the *essential dilemma* and its evolution.

The chapter further demonstrates the crucial part played by (Christian) Zionist sentiments among crucial Labour Party leaders, who were able to mediate those responses in the absence of a 'natural' and unified ideological response from within the party. Key individuals within the party identified with political Zionism on the basis of a religious philosophy which they believed had much in common with Zionist aspirations for a 'return' to the Holy Land. The combination of perceived *common origins* and Christian or pro-Zionist sentiments played their part through the *psychological* responses of individuals within the party to political Zionism. Ultimately, however, an inability to reconcile psychological support for political Zionism, and a perception of shared progressive (even socialist ideology) with the anti-imperialist ideological underpinnings of socialist belief created the *essential dilemma* to which this chapter refers.

The chapter charts the development of this *essential dilemma* as Labour responded to a combination of *internal* and *external determinants*. *Internal determinants* refers to factors derived specifically from the Labour Party's own development (events, issues, status as opposition or governing party, and personalities) while *external determinants* refers to those factors and events beyond the direct influence of the Labour Party, including developments in Palestine itself and the impact of two World Wars.

From this early stage, the chapter demonstrates the crucial role played by *key individuals* within the party, who were able to sway policy on the basis of their own

personal commitments and empathies in the absence of a coherent and unified ideological party response. The ideological response of the party might initially have seemed clear, given the perceived *common origins* and progressive character of political Zionism. However, as evidence mounted that political Zionism was formulated through an essentially nationalist and colonialist movement, the ideological contradictions left the party divided and its policy incoherent. Into this vacuum stepped those individuals whose personal commitments were based on the psychological factors mentioned above. They were the principal agents in directing policy and thus become the focus of our study in this chapter, rather than the institutional organs of the Labour Party and the trade unions that might normally be assumed to be the focus of a study about the formulation of policy.

The British Labour Party in the early years: Foreign Policy and Reconciling Socialism with Nationalism

‘The Labour Party is a characteristically British production differing widely from Continental Socialist Parties. It is the product of its environment and of the national habit of mind. It grew out of the practical necessities of society rather than from any abstract theory.’¹⁵⁸

The British Labour Party was founded in 1900. Originally called the Labour Representation Committee (LRC)¹⁵⁹ the LRC changed its name to the Labour Party in 1906. The LRC and Labour Party proper emerged as a product of sections of left-wing trades unions and a collection of socialist political parties. These socialist parties included the Social Democratic Federation,¹⁶⁰ the Fabians Society¹⁶¹ and the

¹⁵⁸ Tracey, Herbert (1948: 1) *The British Labour Party: Its History, Growth Policy and Leaders*, Clement Attlee, Forward, Volume 1, (London: Caxton)

¹⁵⁹ Labour Representation Committee (est. February 27, 1900) at a conference attended by the trades unions affiliated to the TUC and a number of socialist political parties, societies and movements.

¹⁶⁰ Social Democratic Federation (SDF) (est. June 7, 1881) [originally Democratic Federation until 1884 (DF)] was the first British socialist party.

¹⁶¹ Fabians Society (est. January 4, 1884) a socialist intellectual group promoting gradualist and reformist socialism, as opposed to revolutionary socialism.

Independent Labour Party¹⁶² which agreed - along with the unions and TUC - at a specially convened conference to form the LRC (Labour Party). All of these organs became affiliated to the LRC (Labour Party).

The components of the Labour Party comprised the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP), affiliated trades unions, socialist societies and the Co-operative Party (1920),¹⁶³ and later, Constituency Labour Parties. Labour's decision and policy-making organs on a formal national level included the National Executive Committee (NEC), party conference, and the National Policy Forum, but the final decision and policy-making remained with the Parliamentary Labour Party leadership (Prime Minister and Cabinet).

Labour's agenda and policy focus were almost entirely domestic. Although Labour was nominally an internationalist socialist party, the realities of the immense domestic challenges facing the party's few MPs (franchise extensions, education, health and welfare) with limited resources and parliamentary experience, and a largely impoverished constituency meant foreign affairs was very much a secondary consideration, if not a distant luxury. As the historian K. D. Brown states:

'[George] Bernard Shaw insisted that he had no time to concern himself with foreign policy before 1914 because he was too much preoccupied with . . . working out a practical programme for English socialists and establishing a Parliamentary Labour Party. In the years before the Great War, very few socialists took any interest in Foreign Affairs.'¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Independent Labour Party (est. January 14, 1893) (ILP) Democratic Socialist Party, its Christian socialist founder Keir Hardie became the first ILP and British socialist MP in the 1892 General Election.

¹⁶³ Co-operative Party (est. 1920) socialist party its candidates stand jointly with Labour as Labour-Co-Op candidates in general elections; 27 were elected in 1997.

¹⁶⁴ Brown, K. D. [Editor] (1985: 268) *The First Labour Party 1906-1914*, Chapter 12, *Labour and Foreign Affairs: A Search for Identity and Policies*, (London: Croom Helm)

The Labour Party had joined the Second International in 1907, in line with the proposition that the working classes of the world shared common interests in the historic struggle against the capitalist classes. In real terms, however, the most pressing foreign policy considerations for the party were derived from Britain's imperial status. Whilst socialism was clear on the identification of imperialism as an advanced stage of capitalist, left-wing intellectuals like John A. Hobson¹⁶⁵ and Henry Noel Brailsford¹⁶⁶ understood imperial diplomacy as a sophisticated form of commercial rivalry and thus not the appropriate domain for socialist activity. An additional paternalist dimension to the debate was contributed by George Bernard Shaw,¹⁶⁷ who proposed that the 'White Man's Burden' lay not in debate over whether to possess empire or not, but rather in how to manage Empire in a civilised and civilising manner. In general, however, such discussions were confined to leftist intellectual minorities. The large part of the Labour Party was uninterested in, and ignorant of, foreign affairs. Additionally, unlike the Conservatives and Liberals the Labour Party had little or no prior experience of international affairs, with the consequence that the party as a whole, and even the great intellectual figures within the Labour Party, devoted little time and effort towards the subject. The Labour leader, Robert Clynes,¹⁶⁸ described Labour's foreign policy aims in the years up to 1937 as follows:

¹⁶⁵ John Atkinson Hobson (b.1858-d.1940) a British economist and critic of imperialism; Hobson's *magnum opus*, *Imperialism: A Study* (1902) argued the basis of imperialism was to secure new markets, influencing Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (1951).

¹⁶⁶ Leonard Woolf (b.1880-d.1969) was a political theorist, author, civil servant and publisher; joined the Labour Party and the Fabian Society, circa, 1914.

¹⁶⁷ Henry Noel Brailsford (b.1873-d.1958) a British Labour related figure, the son of a Methodist preacher, Brailsford was a left-wing journalist and foreign correspondent for *The Manchester Guardian*, specializing in Egypt. An Independent Labour Party (ILP) member (1907-1932) he unsuccessfully Labour candidate in the 1918 general election; noted for his anti-colonial work *Rebel India* (1931) and articles for the *New Statesman* and *Tribune*.

¹⁶⁸ George Bernard Shaw (b.1856-d.1950) Irish playwright and socialist; a Fabian and pamphleteer, he helped establish the Labour Party.

¹⁶⁹ John Robert Clynes (b.1869-d.1949) MP: (Manchester North East), (Manchester Putting, 1918-1931, 1935-1945); Labour leader, 1921-1922; Home Secretary, 1929-1931. Born in Oldham, the son of a labourer Clynes left school, aged 10, to work in a cotton mill.

‘The foreign policy of Labour has always been to remain friendly with other nations equally, not favouring one above the other.’¹⁶⁹

Common Origins: The Labour Party and the Political Zionism Movement

A notable exception to this alleged disinterest in foreign affairs arose as the Labour Party developed a response to the rise of political Zionism in the early twentieth century. A crucial factor in determining the *basis* and *nature* of relations between the Labour and political Zionist movements were their perceived *common origins*. The vast majority of Labour’s support was derived largely from the industrial urban slums, and the need to emancipate and amend the conditions of working-classes were similar to the origins of political Zionism which drew its support from the predominantly poor Jewish communities and the attempts to improve social, economic and political conditions among the Ghettoes of Europe and the Russian Pales.¹⁷⁰ In terms of their *common origins* the alignment between the socialist ideologies and agendas of Labour and political Zionism was also assisted by the associations and familiarity between the working classes which included many Jewish communities.

From the earliest beginnings the relationship between the British Labour Party and organised political Zionists in Britain was based on some common characteristics. Both the Labour Party (1900) and the Zionist Organisation (1897)¹⁷¹ were founded

¹⁶⁸ Clynes, John Robert (1937: 245) *Memoirs 1924-1937*, Chapter XIX, 1935-1937 - *Trouble in Palestine - A country promised to two races - Lawrence of Arabia versus Lord Balfour - War in the Holy Land*, (London: Hutchinson)

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., (1937: 216) Chapter XVII, 1932-1935 - *Britain’s Foreign Outlook, Storm Clouds over Europe*

¹⁷⁰ A territory or jurisdiction surrounded by hostile people and/or power. Used to denote British held territory in fourteenth and fifteenth century Ireland, a Pale of Settlement referred to Tsarist Russia where areas allocated to Jews; demarcated by a post or stake called a Pale, Jews were forbidden to pass, hence the English language term, ‘beyond the Pale.’

¹⁷¹ The Zionist Organisation (ZO) was established by political Zionists at the First Zionist Congress, Basle, Switzerland (August 29-31, 1897), as an umbrella organisation for the Zionist movement. The congress was organised by Theodor Herzl (ZO President, 1897-1904) and Max Simon Nordau (b.1849-d.1923). The ZO was re-named the World Zionist

within a few years of each other. The primary motivations for their founding were in many respects similar in that the Labour Party was formed by social pioneers based in London who wanted to improve the lives of the working-classes in terms of education, health, political and employment rights. Similarly, the political Zionist's wanted to improve the social, economic and political conditions of Jews in Europe and Russia. Although important contributions were made by rural agrarian communities, the Labour Party and that part of the political Zionist movement which developed in Britain arose predominantly in the sprawling industrial slums, notably London, Manchester and Glasgow; these cities were also home to the majority of the Jewish communities, many of them immigrants to Britain having fled persecution in Eastern Europe and Russia.

The work of Robert Roberts captures this shared predicament as he said of his own experience of the Jewish poor of Manchester (c.1900-1925) 'The Jews, twenty thousand strong, dwelt in an area adjacent to ours, some in poverty so appalling that it shocked even us.'¹⁷² And the fictionalized predicament presented by Jewish assimilation and Christian Zionism conveyed in George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* were followed by the more overtly socialist publications such as Robert Tressell's *Ragged Trousered Philanthropist* (1914) and George Orwell's *Road to Wigan Pier* (1937).

The Labour Party emerged from a combination of trades unions and the industrial working class. The Labour movement was defined by public demonstrations, strikes and non-violent confrontation to improve social conditions and achieve political parliamentary reform, building on the earlier work of the Chartist movement and others.¹⁷³ The reaction of the state towards the Chartists in handing down judicial

Organisation (WZO) in January 1960. British Jewish support for political Zionism was minimal, in response, the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland was established in 1899 to which Chaim Weizmann (ZO President, 1921-1931, 1935-1946) became attached.

¹⁷² Roberts, Robert (1971: 171) *The Classic Slum: Salford in the First Quarter of the Century*, Chapter 8, *Culture*, (London: Pelican)

¹⁷³ The Chartist movement (c.1838-1848) advocated political and parliamentary reform including universal male suffrage (Men over 21), secret ballot voting, a parliamentary salary and abolition of property qualification for election to Parliament, annual Parliaments and

sentences of penal servitude and/or transportation for life¹⁷⁴ and the violent repression of public gatherings and political demonstrations like that at Peterloo¹⁷⁵ were also directed at union activists exemplified by the Tolpuddle Martyrs,¹⁷⁶ and as such were not that dissimilar to the discrimination, repression, pogroms and banishment to the Pales and Ghettos experienced by the Jews in Eastern Europe and Russia.

Both Labour and the political Zionists were closely aligned to the Trades Union movement. The Labour Party was born from the activities and sponsorship of the unions, and many of its early MPs were union members and leaders. As a consequence of this shared trades unionism and political background, the first official links between the Labour Party and political Zionism were established. Both the delight and recognition of the linkage, the achievements and future potential resulting from the Labour-political Zionism alignment are adequately acknowledged by James S. Middleton (Labour General Secretary 1935-1944)¹⁷⁷ as he declared:

equal electoral districts. See: Chase, Malcolm (2007) *Chartism: A New History*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press)

¹⁷⁴ See: Clarke, Marcus (1970) *The Term of His Natural Life*, (London: Penguin), and, Hughes, Robert (1988) *The Fatal Shore: A History of the Transportation of Convicts to Australia 1787-1868*, (London: Pan Books)

¹⁷⁵ Peterloo Massacre: St Peter's Field, Manchester (August 16, 1819) an open public meeting attended by 60,000 organised by the Manchester Patriotic Union Society campaigning for parliamentary reform was charged by cavalry and yeomanry killing eleven, and wounding 500.

¹⁷⁶ Tolpuddle Martyrs: a group of nineteenth century labourers transported to Australia for swearing an oath to the Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers, and early trade union. Although the 1799 Combinations Act prohibiting the formation of unions had been repealed in 1824, a 1797 law prohibiting oaths was invoked to deport the society's members.

¹⁷⁷ James Smith Middleton (b.1878-d.1962) was Assistant Party Secretary, 1900-1935; pro-political Zionist Labour related figure, Morgan Phillips (b.1902-1963) succeeded Middleton as General Secretary (1944-1961); Phillips was Chairman of the Socialist International 1948-1957.

‘Labour [Labor] Zionism¹⁷⁸ is the greatest revolutionary force in modern Jewish history. It has carried out one of the most amazing Socialist experiments in our time. It is a movement that has a message for Jew and non-Jew alike.’¹⁷⁹

For the ‘romantic socialism of the middle-class’ and the industrial workers frustrated with the ‘blinkered gradualism’ of the formal party political structure, ‘utopia was planned collectivism.’¹⁸⁰ Nowhere in the first decades of the 20th century was collectivism epitomised more purely than in the *Kibbutzim*,¹⁸¹ the *Histadrut*¹⁸² and the rural agrarian Labor Zionist colonies of Palestine, as identified and witnessed by a swath of Labour MPs including Ramsay Macdonald, Josiah Wedgwood,¹⁸³ Herbert Morrison and Henry Snell.

The association between political Zionism and socialism had not always been explicit. ‘When the first Zionist Congress met in Basle in 1897, there had been no mention of Socialism.’¹⁸⁴ At this stage, political Zionism was orchestrated primarily by Western European Jews who shred Herzl’s bourgeois characteristics. Nonetheless, socialist ideas were rapidly spreading among East European Jews, attracted by the promises of Russian socialism. Writers like Nikolai Chernyshevsky,¹⁸⁵ Nachman Syrkin and Dov

¹⁷⁸ Labor Zionism refers to the socialist section of the broader political Zionism movement.

¹⁷⁹ Levenberg, Schneier (1945: 8) *The Jews and Palestine: A Study in Labour Zionism*, quoting, James Middleton, *Preface*, (London: The Narod Press)

¹⁸⁰ Jefferys, Kevin (2002: 172) *Labour Forces: From Ernest Bevin to Gordon Brown*, Chapter 10, Tim Bale, *Barbara Castle*, (London: I. B. Tauris)

¹⁸¹ The Kibbutz movement is an agricultural collective community that blends the ideologies of socialism and political Zionism into what is commonly referred to as Labor Zionism.

¹⁸² *Histadrut* (Jewish Federation of Labor) est.1920: The Zionist and Israeli equivalent of the Trades Union Council (TUC). It is nominally socialist but excludes Arab/Palestinian workers.

¹⁸³ Josiah Wedgwood (b.1872-d.1943) MP: (Liberal till 1919, then Independent Labour Party) (Newcastle-Under-Lyme, 1906-1942).

¹⁸⁴ Laqueur, Walter (1972: 270) *A History of Zionism*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson)

¹⁸⁵ Nikolai Chernyshevsky (b.1828-d.1889) a Russian born philosopher and journalist, the son of a priest, and author of *What is to be done?* (1863), a novel written in prison, viewed as a blueprint for political radicalism, admired by Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg.

Ber Borochoy, pioneered the intellectual and synthesis of socialism and Marxism with the Jewish struggle for national emancipation and it was not long before socialist Zionism became a prominent political force within the Zionist Organisation and the wider political Zionist movement. Borochoy in particular argued that the Jewish proletariat would be unable to participate in the global class struggle under its current oppressive status and that only once national emancipation had been achieved, could it then contribute fully to the wider struggle. As Jewish settlers moved in increasing numbers to Palestine from Russia and East Europe in the early twentieth century, this ideological socialism acquired more practical dimensions, resulting in the establishment of Labor Zionism under the political leadership of individuals like David Ben-Gurion¹⁸⁶ (later prime minister of Israel), a brand of political Zionism which emphasised collectivism, voluntarism, and internationalism. Although these were largely ideals to be applied specifically to the Jewish 'redemption' of the land in Palestine, they had much in common with the ideals of the British Labour Party, eschewing the more militant positions of communism and far-left politics in favour of community-based political action.

An additional factor supporting the alignment of Labour and political Zionism arose from the fact that many Labour figures were Christian socialists. The Old Testaments and the New Testaments of the bible were a binding force in that Labour figures were relatively aware - and in some cases fluent in knowledge - of the Jewish faith and ancient historical experience; as a result of their Christian education and faith, Labour figures were often more familiar with the history, culture and maps of the ancient Hebrews and Palestine than their own histories. This is what may be termed the *related religious philosophies* aspect of the *common origins*. (Ironically, the religious and Messianic branches of Zionism, derived from the Judaic faith of the Old Testament, which recounted the 'return of God's Chosen to the Promised Land,' had little in common with socialism and were themselves at odds within the World Zionist Organisation, and all forms of Labor and Marxist Zionism).

¹⁸⁶ David Ben-Gurion (b.1886-d.1973) political Zionist leader, born Plonsk, Poland [Russian Empire] arrived Palestine 1906. PM of Israel [Labor]: 1948-1953, 1955-1963.

In stark contrast to the *common origins* and *related religious philosophies* between Labour and political Zionism, there were virtually no comparable factors from which to form a Labour-Palestinian relationship of any such equivalence. Apart from the domestic focus and widespread ignorance and apathy towards foreign affairs within Labour, there was also the fact that - unlike the *basis* of Labour's relations with political Zionism, there were few comparable political ideological aspects upon which a Labour-Palestinian relationship could be based; and certainly none based in Britain. Although there were a few examples of Labour figures who had knowledge and experience of Palestine and the Palestinians (Ramsay MacDonald c.1922 and Thomas S. B. Williams c.1924, for example), the crucial fact that there were initially no resident Palestinian or Arab communities in Britain meant that no common origins and identities were formed.

Similarly, although there were significant Palestinian Christian communities in Palestine, there were no Labour figures that were of Palestinian origins, or even the Muslim faith (the religion of the vast majority of Palestinians), while in contrast numerous Jewish figures held office within the Labour Party and therefore political Zionists had potentially more natural internal advocates. Furthermore, few, if any, Labour figures would have undertaken Islamic studies at school or university with the result that the commonalities Judaism and Christianity shared with Islam as three great monotheistic faiths that also shared the Prophets of Abraham, Moses and Jesus was largely lost therefore as a *basis* for Labour-Palestinian relations premised on *related religious philosophies*. Additionally, Jewish assimilation had a long and established history due in part after Oliver Cromwell¹⁸⁷ had amended the Laws preventing Jews from taking residence in England and serving in Parliament. In 1858 the removal of the disqualification of orthodox Jews was revoked, leading to the election of the first orthodox Jew to Parliament, Lionel Rothschild.¹⁸⁸ As a result

¹⁸⁷ Oliver Cromwell reversed Edward I 'Edict of Expulsion' (1290) banishing Jews from England in 1657. The purge led to 300 Jewish executions in the Tower of London and the compulsory wearing of a yellow segment of cloth identifying Jews – a tactic later adopted by the German Nazi regime (1933-1945).

¹⁸⁸ Lionel Nathan de Rothschild (b.1808-d.1879) was elected as Liberal MP in 1847; Rothschild's refusal to swear an oath on the Christian Bible excluded him until 1858 when a

Jewish figures were a feature of British political life and wider diplomatic service and society culminating in the Premierships of a Jewish born Benjamin Disraeli,¹⁸⁹ and succeeded by such notables as the Rothschild family and figures like Chaim Weizmann¹⁹⁰ and Herbert Samuel.¹⁹¹

As for much of British society, Palestine - where any thought or awareness existed at all in the Labour Party, - was often viewed in terms of a biblical romanticism through almost mythical coloured spectacles. These perceptions of Palestine were sustained by the experiences and works of writers, painters and travellers among the missionaries, artists and military-diplomatic personnel that served to create an image of a people and landscape somehow locked in time - that in terms of its reflective value of the actual realities was largely nonsense. For example, it was the seventeenth century English Poet - George Sandys (b.1578-d.1644) - who introduced the notion of Palestine as 'a land that flowed with milk and honey; and no part empty of delight or profit'¹⁹² into a western consciousness already receptively fertile imaginings extracted from the bible and a Christian based education. Bishop Reginald Heber's *Lamentation over Palestine* poetically reflects this popular empathy felt by Christians and Jews to a land lost to time and Islam:

'Reft of thy sons, amid thy foes forlorn,
While cold oblivion, 'mid thy ruins laid,

Bill revoking the requirement to use the Christian term 'God' - Rothschild used Hebrew *Elohim* - allowed him to take his seat.

¹⁸⁹ Benjamin Disraeli (b.1804-d.1881) Conservative PM: 1874-1880, 1868; born of Jewish parents Disraeli was baptised aged 13 into the Church of England (1817).

¹⁹⁰ Chaim Weizmann (b.1874-d.1952) was leader of the Zionist Organisation, 1921-1931/1935-1946, and the first President of Israel, 1948-1952.

¹⁹¹ Herbert Samuel (b.1870-d.1963) was a Liberal politician and diplomat; first High Commissioner to Palestine (July 1, 1920-August 25, 1925). See: Wasserstein, Bernard (1992) *Herbert Samuel: A Political Life*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press) and Samuel, Herbert (1945) *Memoirs*, (London: Cresset Press)

¹⁹² Said, Edward W. (1992: 11) *The Question of Palestine*, quoting, Richard Bevis, *Making the Desert Bloom: An Historical Picture of Pre-Zionist Palestine*, The Middle East New Letter, Vol. 2, February-March 1971, pp.4, (London: Vintage)

And morn the captive land you loved so well.’¹⁹³

How the *common origins* and *related religious philosophies* were reflected in key Labour and related figures.

It is possible to identify the influences of the *common origins, shared socialist ideology* and *related religious philosophies* upon the thinking and positions of key Labour figures of the inter-war period. Following the death of the first Labour Leader - Keir Hardie¹⁹⁴ - in 1915, the most significant Labour figure to encapsulate all the factors comprising the *common origins* and *related religious philosophies* of Labour’s support for political Zionism was Ramsay MacDonald. For over a decade MacDonald presided as chairman and leader of the party. His role at Labour’s helm also coincided with some of the most dramatic events and issues in the conflict between the Palestinians and the political Zionists over Palestine, which was to have profound consequences for the *basis* and *nature* of relations between Labour and political Zionism.

MacDonald was Foreign Secretary at the same time that he was Prime Minister during the Labour minority government of 1924. The former Labour leader, John Robert Clynes referring to Ramsay MacDonald’s tenureship as Foreign Secretary in 1924 said the following:

‘While he was with us, his foreign policy was the Labour one of mutual friendship with all other nations.’¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ Campbell, F. (1824: 2-4) *Beauties of the British Poets; with Notices, Biographical and Critical*, quoting, Rt. Rev. Reginald Heber, *Lamentation over Palestine*, Volume II, (London: Richard Edwards)

¹⁹⁴ Although James Keir Hardie (b.1856-d.1915) MP: (West Ham South, 1892-1895; Merthyr Tydfil, 1900-1915) died before he could become acquainted with political Zionism, the conversion to Christianity of the party’s first leader (1906-1908) provided an early foundation in the *related religious philosophies* aspect of Labour-political Zionist relations. Hardie was born in Lanarkshire, Scotland, left school aged 11, to be a miner; he was chairman of the Independent Labour Party (1893-1900, 1913-1914), and the Labour Party (1906-1908).

¹⁹⁵ Clynes, John Robert (1937: 245)

MacDonald was relatively well informed on the issues of the Jewish question, political Zionism, Palestine and the Middle East generally. As such he was reasonably well placed to consider Labour's policy position, as well as crafting a response to issues and events as they arose and developed during his lengthy tenureship.

As the Labour Leader, MacDonald had undertaken a tour of the Middle East in 1922.¹⁹⁶ The primary purpose of the visit was to make an assessment of the countries and territories acquired by Britain at the conclusion of the First World War in 1918 and which had previously resided within the jurisdiction of the Sultanates of the borders of the Ottoman Empire; the tour was to incorporate Palestine, administered since 1920 by the British under a League of Nations mandate. MacDonald had been among the first Labour figures to establish contacts with the various organs of the political Zionist movement, in this case, *Poale Zion* members Shlomo Kaplansky¹⁹⁷ and Berl Katznelson.¹⁹⁸ Before his departure he used these contacts to express his interest in the Jewish labor movement and political Zionism in general.

MacDonald documented his visit to Palestine in a 1922 pamphlet publication, *A Socialist in Palestine*, which provides an early and invaluable insight into his personal response to the visit and the activities of political Zionism in Palestine.¹⁹⁹ What is immediately apparent - even in the context of the early 1920s - is the swooning biblical and lamenting prosaic style employed:

‘After wandering I seem to have come home, for I feel as familiar with this place as I do with the benty hillocks of Lossiemouth [Scotland]. I write in a room at Nazareth, and for days I have been in places where I have lived

¹⁹⁶ Philip Snowden and Josiah Wedgwood travelled with MacDonald to Palestine in 1922

¹⁹⁷ Shlomo Kaplansky (b.1894-d.1950) was a founding figure of *Poale Zion*, a World Union's representative to the Socialist International and a leading proponent of bi-nationalism.

¹⁹⁸ Berl Katznelson (b.1887-d.1944) was a key intellectual founder of labor Zionism; born Bobruysk, Russia, he arrived in Palestine in 1909.

¹⁹⁹ In addition, R. MacDonald also wrote articles for the Zionist Organisation of America's publication, *New Palestine*, that clearly convey the biblical dimension: *The Great Return: The Alluring Call of Palestine*, (May 5, 1922); *A Pilgrim's Impressions of Palestine*, (June 23, 1922); and *The Great Jewish Return*, (January 24, 1924)

without setting foot in them before. Places which I have now seen as though I had, in dreams, dwelt in them for as long as I can remember.'²⁰⁰

For Ramsay MacDonald, as a deeply committed Christian, with a childhood steeped in a religious education and studies, the visit to Palestine felt neither the first or an unfamiliar experience, - but a 'return' to something familiar. This affinity with Palestine in large part based on the religious component is directly related by MacDonald to the related Jewish experience - the 'calling' - and by linking their salvation as a justification for the political aspect of Zionism in referencing the plight of Jews elsewhere denied rights and protection in Europe and Russia. As MacDonald says:

'The Jew seeks a national home in Palestine not only because he is denied a home elsewhere, but because Palestine has always been calling to him from his heart and he must go.'²⁰¹

A measure of the depth of MacDonald's early commitment to political Zionism can be gleaned from his account of the historic components of western prejudice and persecution towards the Jews. It was this that stimulated the idea and led to the development of political Zionism in the first instance, and for MacDonald it provides the source of a scathing criticism of those Jews who do not embrace the new political Zionist ideology as an opportunity to address the historic and ongoing injustices:

'He [the anti-political Zionist Jew] is the person whose views upon life make one antisemitic. He has no country, no kindred. Whether as a sweeter or a financier, he is an exploiter of everything he can squeeze. He is behind every ill that governments do, and his political authority, always exercised in the dark, is greater than that of parliamentary majorities. He has the keenest of brains and the bluntest of consciences. He detests Zionism because it revives

²⁰⁰ MacDonald, Ramsay (1922: 9) *A Socialist in Palestine*, (London: Poale Zion)

²⁰¹ Ibid., (1922: 5)

the idealism of his race, and has political implications which threaten his economic interests.^{202 203}

The academic Joseph Gorny claims Ramsay MacDonald was a 'complex personality' possessing a 'contradictory nature, combining religious tendencies and sober rationalism, idealistic zeal and calculating political opportunism, humanism and snobbish arrogance,'²⁰⁴ and that his [MacDonald's] laments of the metaphysical, spiritual singularity of Palestine also account for his views on the nature of the political Zionism:

'... that as a national concept and a social movement, Zionism could not be comprehended without recognition of the romantic spiritual ties between the Jewish people and Palestine.'²⁰⁵

²⁰² Ibid., (1922: 7)

²⁰³ A consequence of visits to Palestine (and later Israel) and the European, Western (occidental) origins and cultural characteristics of many political Zionists, key Labour figures across the generations saw their own histories, experiences, cultures and societies reflected in what socialist Zionism was creating in Palestine, and later Israel: a national society moulded on Western and European models, notions of civilisation and technical advancement, which clearly illustrate culturally based perceptions of superiority and prejudice towards the Orient. As, for example, Ramsay MacDonald conveyed in 1922: 'When one walks through Te-Aviv . . . One feels as though this place were across no sea, as though it were a short railway journey from London or any other Western town. It might be an English watering-place with a Continental touch about it.' And similarly, why in 1958 Richard Crossman thought the 'Zionist philosophy' was essential to the 'renaissance of the Arab world.' Collette, Christine & Bird, Stephen [Editors] (2000) Chapter 3, Deborah Osmond, *British Jewry and Labour Politics, 1918-39*, quoting, Ramsay J. MacDonald (1923: 12-13) *In Palestine Now*, in Simon, Leon & Stein, Leonard [Editors] *Awakening Palestine*, (London: John Murray), and, Crossman, Richard (1960: 104) *A Nation Reborn: The Israel of Weizmann, Bevin and Ben-Gurion*, Chapter III, *The First Ten Years of Independence: David Ben-Gurion VIII*, (London: Hamish Hamilton)

²⁰⁴ Gorny, Joseph (1982: 30)

²⁰⁵ Ibid., (1982: 30)

MacDonald was accompanied on his 1922 visit to Palestine by Chief Whip, Arthur Henderson,²⁰⁶ Philip Snowden²⁰⁷ (newly elected backbencher), and Josiah Clement Wedgwood. Norman Rose described Wedgwood as the 'foremost patron of Zionism in England.'²⁰⁸ Of his generation Josiah Wedgwood was the Labour figure most familiar with Palestine and the Zionist venture therein; as well as travelling there with Ramsay MacDonald and Arthur Henderson in 1922, he returned in 1926-1927 and 1933. Wedgwood defined political Zionism and how it might be adopted into Britain's wider interests in the Middle East as follows:

'The object of Zionism is to increase, perhaps create, the self-respect of a scattered and submerged race. The supreme work of statesmanship, or of philosophy, is to raise man's self respect. All virtues come there from. When Theodor Herzl started Zionism he knew what he was about, and the stuff he had to work on. But I had never heard of Zionism till I saw political and strategic virtue in a buffer State between Germany Turkey and British Egypt and Africa.'²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ Arthur Henderson (b.1863-d.1935) MP: (Barnard Castle, 1903-1918), (Widnes, 1919-1922), (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne East, 1922-1923), (Barnsley, 1924-1931); Labour leader 1908-1910, 1914-1917, 1931-1932; Foreign Secretary 1924-1931, and again 1933-1935; Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (1934). Born in Glasgow, Scotland, Henderson left School aged 12, converting from Congregationalism to Methodism.

²⁰⁷ Philip Snowden had accompanied Ramsay MacDonald to Palestine in 1922; although a pro-political Zionist figure he was not - unlike R. MacDonald - apparently sufficiently moved by the experience to recount the events or his impressions in his exhaustive memoirs [Snowden, Philip Viscount (1934) *An Autobiography*, 2 Volumes, (London: Nicholson and Watson)], and neither did his biographers: Cross, Colin (1966) *Philip Snowden*, (London: Barrie & Rockliff); and, Laybourn, Keith (1987) *Philip Snowden: The first Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer*, (Bradford: Bradford Libraries & Information Services)

²⁰⁸ Rose, Norman *The Seventh Dominion*, The Historical Journal, Vol. XIV, Issue No. 2, June 1971, pp.397-416, p.399

²⁰⁹ Wedgwood, Josiah C. (1940: 132) *Memoirs of a Fighting Life*, Chapter VIII, *Backs to the Wall*, (London: Hutchinson & Co)

Rose says that a great deal of the interest and 'factors that prompted Wedgwood, and many of his contemporaries, to champion the Zionist creed' arose from the Protestant, non-conformist tradition,²¹⁰ and also as a result of what Rose identifies as bringing 'Western civilization to the desert.'²¹¹ As Wedgwood himself asserts, there is a direct correlation with the ideology and aims of the socialist Labour Party and the political Zionism movement:

'Zionism is doing for the Jews what the Labour Party seeks to do for the British working class.'²¹²

Wedgwood was introduced to political Zionism from the perspective of what he viewed as the creating of a 'Jewish Palestine'²¹³ in April 1916, as a result of military service during the Gallipoli campaign in Turkey. But it was in the following autumn after a meeting with the novelist Dorothy Richardson that he became fully persuaded of the concept, as he says, it was at that point 'I first came to hear of Zionism as a creed.'²¹⁴ ²¹⁵ As a result of this meeting with Richardson, and a first meeting with Chaim Weizmann in December 1916 (after Lloyd George had seconded Weizmann to the war effort in his capacity as a Chemistry Professor), Wedgwood turned a desire to assist the Zionist agenda for Palestine into a practical dimension. Soon after that series of meetings and the confirmation of his conversion to political Zionism, Wedgwood

²¹⁰ Rose, Norman (1971: 399)

²¹¹ Ibid., (1971: 400)

²¹² Wedgwood, Josiah C. (1928: 119-121) *The Seventh Dominion*, (London: Hutchinson & Co)

²¹³ Wedgwood, Josiah C. (1940: 118) Chapter VIII

²¹⁴ Ibid., (1940: 132)

²¹⁵ Assessments of Dorothy Richardson's commitment to political Zionism vary: Fromm says, 'She herself was neutral about it [political Zionism]' Fromm, Gloria G. (1977: 76) *Dorothy Richardson: A Biography*, (Urbana: University Illinois Press); And 'she too supported this cause' are two perspectives, though Rosenberg states it was the influence of Benjamin [Berg] Grad a Jewish Russian exile and 'ardently Zionist' who greatly influenced Richardson and Wedgwood's position towards Zionism. Rosenberg, John (1973: 28) *Dorothy Richardson: The Genius they Forgot*, (London: Duckworth)

undertook a meeting with leading British and Zionist figures, which resulted in a document that epitomised what became the *essential dilemma* for Labour.

While the Balfour Declaration of 1917 bears the name of the British Foreign Secretary - Arthur Balfour²¹⁶ - it is less well known and recorded that it was Wedgwood who organised and assisted in motivating the leading figures of the day into actively facilitating a Jewish Home in Palestine, notably by helping to 'devise a plan' to secure a British 'legal' commitment to that political Zionist goal. Wedgwood conveys the circumstances from which the declaration arose with a retrospectively breath-taking nonchalance:

'A little luncheon to devise a plan, which plan ultimately became the Balfour Declaration, took place in the Reform Club - just Rufus Isaacs,²¹⁷ Neil Primrose,²¹⁸ I, and (I think) James de Rothschild, not then M.P., but Neil's shadow. Mark Sykes discovered Zionism about the same time as myself, though I was never intimate with him till after the Sykes-Picot treaty²¹⁹ was signed.'²²⁰

²¹⁶ Arthur James Balfour (b.1848-d.1930) MP: (Manchester East, 1885-1890); Conservative leader, 1902-1911; PM: 1902-1905; Foreign Secretary, 1916-1919.

²¹⁷ Rufus Daniel Isaacs [1st Marquess of Reading, 1926] (b.1860-d.1935) was Liberal politician and jurist, Ambassador to USA (1918-1919) and Foreign Secretary (1931).

²¹⁸ Neil Primrose (b.1882-d.1917) Liberal politician. J C. Wedgwood states before Primrose was killed in the Gaza campaign it had been 'understood between Mr. Lloyd George and him that he should be the first High Commissioner for Palestine. Had he survived, the whole history of Palestine would have been very different - not least because the Hon. Neil Primrose would have made a Jewish Palestine respectable in the dull eyes of snobbish military opinion'. Wedgwood, Josiah C. (1940: 133) Chapter VIII, *Backs to the Wall*.

²¹⁹ Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916) was secretly signed by Sir Mark Sykes (b.1897-d.1919) a Conservative political and diplomatic advisor and the French diplomat Francois Georges-Picot to divide the former Ottoman Turkish territories in the Middle East between the British and French governments ignoring previous promises of independence to Arab leaders.

²²⁰ Wedgwood, Josiah C. (1940: 132)

Six months before the November 1917 Balfour Declaration was eventually made public, and in the same period after the 'luncheon' at which the declaration was devised, Wedgwood had undertaken an active public campaign on behalf of political Zionism, which he was to develop and continue over the coming decade. Although evidently deeply committed, Wedgwood freely admitted he was still quite ignorant of the complete character of political Zionism:

'In June 1917 I was speaking for the [Zionist] cause in London with much fervour and little knowledge, based chiefly on my American visit and our need for help from the Jews of the world. Later [after the United States joined WWI in 1917] we welcomed . . . the first Jewish regiments in arms, from America - they who were promised land in the Promised Land and never got it.'²²¹

Although a significant number of senior Labour colleagues shared Wedgwood's firm opinions in favour of political Zionism (notably Ramsay MacDonald, Arthur Henderson and George Lansbury), these views were not universally appreciated within the party, as Wedgwood noted of the Labour Leader - John Clynes - in 1922:

'The *Labour Leader* was by no means pleased with my Zionist views on Palestine.'²²²

Nonetheless, Wedgwood continues to develop the Zionist contacts he made in the mid-1920s during subsequent visits to Palestine:

'I spent the Christmas [parliamentary] recess of 1926-7 wandering the Near East. In Palestine the whole Zionist organisation entertained us from Dan to Beersheba, and I dispensed good advice to all, from Trades Unions to Governors. I found the worst British Administration in the whole Empire, and the best Jews in the world.'²²³

²²¹ Ibid., (1940: 133)

²²² Ibid., (1940: 177) Chapter V, *India and the Front Bench*

²²³ Ibid., (1940: 194) Chapter XI, *Eclipse*

As a 'consistent supporter of Zionism',²²⁴ there appears to be little or no contradiction between Labour's socialism and the nationalist colonialism of political Zionism in Joshua Wedgwood's vision for Palestine, particularly, as many Labour figures believed, if the transfer of land and political power to the political Zionists in Palestine was a passive, gradualist and non-violent process that delivered economic benefits to the wider population and communities.

The role played by *Poale Zion* and the shared Socialist ideology

Although the role and influence of leading political Zionists like Chaim Weizmann had a significant affect on the *basis* and *nature* of early relations between Labour and political Zionism in Britain, the establishment in Britain of the socialist Zionist political party, *Poale Zion*, and its affiliation to the Labour Party presented a major Zionist achievement contributing towards the movement's key agenda of creating a Jewish-Zionist entity in, or from Palestine.

Apart from the close links and influence of *Poale Zion* to Labour figures and the party, arguably the most influential aspect of Labour-*Poale Zion* relations occurred in the role the socialist Zionists party played in affirming the 'socialist' ideological identity and credentials of the wider political Zionism movement and its activities in Palestine. As a 'socialist' Zionist party, affiliated to the Second International, *Poale Zion* was able to retain not just an influence at the highest levels of the Labour Party, but crucially, as the evidence from Palestine of the existence, resistance and negative consequences for the Palestinians of the Zionist agenda for a Jewish state gradually emerged, along with the growing realities of the nationalist, colonialist and para-military character of political Zionism, it was *Poale Zion* which assisted in retaining the notion among Labour figures - largely ignorant of the actual realities of Palestine and political Zionism - that what was being attempted in Palestine by the political Zionists was indeed socialism being undertaken by socialists; and significantly, that the responses of the Palestinians, where they were know about at all, arose from

²²⁴ Linthwaite, Jacqueline M. (1960: 139) *Zionism and British Policy in Palestine: With Special Reference to the Period 1914-1947*, (The University of Nottingham) quoting, Norman A. Rose, (1973: 1) *The Gentile Zionist: A Study in Anglo-Zionist Diplomacy*, (London: Frank Cass)

nothing more than the provocations of the elitist, land-owning 'feudal and reactionary leaders of the Palestine Arabs.'²²⁵

The inauguration of the British Branch of *Poale Zion* in 1905 occurred at the same time that the Parliamentary Labour Party came into existence in the 1906 General Election, winning 29 seats. On the basis of perceived *common origins* and a *shared socialist ideology*, relations between Labour and *Poale Zion* blossomed until by 1920 *Poale Zion* had not only become a World Confederation, but more significantly - in terms of its ability to influence Labour figures and the party's decision and policy-making process, had become officially affiliated to the Labour Party.

Poale Zion's affiliation to Labour was underwritten by a bedrock of Jewish support for the Labour Party. As the Labour MP - Ian Mikardo - explains:

'Many [Jewish immigrants] joined the Labour Party, especially in local government. While some of the specifically Jewish trade unions lingered on for a while (the longest survivors was the London Jewish Bakers' Union), the great majority of the Jewish workers joined, and took an active part in, the national trade unions, notably in the needle-trades and in cabinet-making.'²²⁶

In addition to the links *Poale Zion* had acquired within Labour and the Trades Union movement, the British branch of this socialist Zionist party had maintained important close links to what became the World Zionist Organisation (WZO), as well as the *Histadrut* (Federation of Jewish Labor in Palestine - the Zionist equivalent of the British Trades Union Council, TUC). Gorny states:

'Poale Zion had become an organised and effective lobby, producing information leaflets and campaign evens from the onset of the war in 1914; Local Secretary J. Pomeranz and the *Jewish Times* Editor Morris Meyer were

²²⁵ Eastwood, Granville (1977: 98) *Harold Laski*, Chapter 4, *American - India - Israel*, quoting, Yaakov Morris [no reference provided], (London: Mowbrays)

²²⁶ Mikado, Ian (1988: 40) *Back-Bencher*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson)

vociferous activists responsible for making the Labour Party and trade union movement aware of Zionist aspirations, and in establishing contact with leaders of both organs.'²²⁷

Gorny continues:

'The Manchester based Zionists led by Harry Sacher claim it was predominantly their efforts that pushed the issue of the Jews and Palestine onto Labour's political platform. Additionally, it is suggested the leading publication the 'New Statesman,' read among the British political elite and which carried Jewish and Zionist articles from 1913 onwards may also have had an effect upon the Labour Party leadership; and further consideration must be given to the special humanistic climate generated by war and the desire to create a more equal and just society.'²²⁸

Although official Labour foreign Policy remained in the control of the Colonial Secretary, Lord Passfield (Sydney Webb), and party leader, Ramsay MacDonald, this did not prevent the more vociferous Labour supporters of political Zionism from attempting to direct Labour's policy further towards the more specific support for a Jewish State, and away from the 1917-1920 position stated in the War Aims Statement advocating the more vague notion of a 'return' of the Jews to Palestine. Zionist influence from within Labour and outside had some notable supporters and a degree of success in relation to this issue. As early as 1920 leading figures from the Executive Committee of the Parliamentary Labour Party and the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress²²⁹ signed and presented to Lloyd George (then attending the San Remo Conference) what had originally been an NEC resolution referring to Palestine becoming a Jewish national homeland, which they

²²⁷ Gorny, Joseph (1983: 8)

²²⁸ Ibid., (1983: 8)

²²⁹ The Committee included: John Clynes (Vice-Chair of Labour in the Commons), H. S. Lindsay (Secretary PLP), W H. Hutchinson (Chair, Labour Executive), Arthur Henderson (Chief Whip), G.H. Thomas (Chair TUC) and Charles William Bowerman (Secretary, Parliamentary Committee of the TUC).

insisted was 'in harmony'²³⁰ not only with the Balfour Declaration, but also Labour's 1917 statement (the pro-political Zionist claim was evidently in error as the War Aims only gave support to a Jewish 'return,' and not a Jewish Homeland or state).

The political Zionist leader Berl Katznelson states the methodology for securing the continuation of Labour's support should include:

'The good relations between the Palestinian and British movements should be carefully fostered by propaganda efforts, and Labour representatives should be invited to visit Palestine to see for themselves what is being achieved there.'²³¹

Although a number of key events arose to severely challenge the *basis* of the relationship between Labour and *Poale Zion* during the difficult inter-war years (not least the 1929 riots in Palestine, 1930 White Paper, and Whitechapel and St. Georges by-election), good relations were nevertheless maintained and for the most part thrived, particularly among some key figures within the party. This was due in large part to the efforts of British based *Poale Zion* figures. As James S. Middleton conveyed in late 1944 the basis and nature of relations as the calamity of the Holocaust was rapidly emerging:

'For 25 years Poale Zion in this country has been affiliated to the Labour Party. During this period much has been accomplished to bring home to British socialists the aims and objects of [political] Zionism - the preservation of racial and religious tradition on the one hand and, on the other, the necessity of developing Palestine as a real Homeland where the oppressed may find refuge and where active young idealists can, by the sweat of their brows, build up a real Commonwealth where the interests and good will of the people are paramount.'²³²

²³⁰ National Executive Committee Report, April 20, 1920, Vol. 18, (London: Labour Party)

²³¹ Gorny, Joseph (1983: 25) *quoting*, Berl Katznelson, *Mapai* archives, December 20, 1921, and January 23, 1922, (London: Frank Cass)

²³² Levenberg, Schneier (1945: 5) *Forward*, *quoting*, James Middleton, (August 1944)

Poale Zion's affiliation to the Labour Party and its influence therein upon relations was not the only political Zionist success: in September 1920 a recommendation was put forward that representatives of *Poale Zion* be co-opted onto Labour's Advisory Committee on International Affairs (ACIA). This appointment would have given *Poale Zion* figures further access and potential influence over a key body in Labour's approach to decision-making on foreign policy. Although the recommendation was eventually rejected, the fact that it was even suggested and considered illustrates the closeness, the level of access and degree of influence this political Zionist group had within important sections of the Labour Party.^{233 234}

The affiliation of *Poale Zion* to Labour and its attendance at Labour Party conferences meant the group was able to regularly re-emphasise the socialist link between Labour, the Labor Zionists and their settlements in Palestine, and the mainstream political Zionist movement as a whole. This role became particularly important as the emergent realities of Palestine and political Zionism became more commonly known among Labour figures as the 1920s and 1930s progressed, and especially at the time when Labour was the party of government (1924, 1929-1931) and directly responsible for policy. *Poale Zion's* quintessential role and achievement was to continuously reiterate the socialist dimension in the *basis* of relations between Labour and political Zionism in Britain to a Labour Party increasingly exposed to contradictory evidence.

In terms of accounting for the increasing resistance of the Palestinians to political Zionism, a key tactic of Zionist approach was to explain the disturbances within the context of socialism, and by emphasising the 'socialist' credentials of Labor Zionism

²³³ Labour's relationship with *Poale Zion* is arguably unique: *Poale Zion's* early affiliation to Labour - a position denied the Communist Party of Great Britain, - facilitated a potential for influence far beyond *Poale Zion's* political and numerical weight, gaining access to leading Labour and union figures, the NEC and TUC, and bodies like the Socialist International. See: Collette, Christine & Bird, Stephen [Editors] (2000: 72-82) Chapter 4

²³⁴ In comparison to *Poale Zion's* affiliation to the Labour Party the Second International, est., 1889, (the predecessor to the Socialist International, est., 1923), refused affiliation citing Jewish separatism and nationalism; *Poale Zion* was later admitted - with Labour's assistance - as a Palestinian party and nationality.

in terms of a force for furthering the cause of all working-classes in Palestine, - both 'Jew' (Zionist) and 'Arab' (Palestinian). And that the resistance to this 'socialist' venture arose not from the Palestinian workers and peasants, but from the land-owning elites prevalent among the Palestinian leadership.

A central reason for the successful alignment of political Zionism - and *Poale Zion* in particular - with Labour resulted from the perception of a *shared socialist ideology*, and what the academic Paul Kelemen identifies as the 'Party's ideological predisposition,'²³⁵ - its socialism. But also because the political Zionists were careful not to expose British politicians, including those of Labour, to the more mainstream and Revisionist sections of political Zionism - that were far from socialist; it was generally relatively moderate political Zionist like Chaim Weizmann to whom political figures were introduced. As the academic historian Paul Johnson says: it was Weizmann who 'banked all his emotional coin in their [British politicians] hearts and on the whole drew a decent dividend'²³⁶ to become the human face of political Zionism for British politicians and Labour figures; the less moderate like David Ben-Gurion, and the Revisionists such as Vladimir [Ze'ev] Jabotinski²³⁷ - whom Ben-Gurion rancorously called 'Vladimir Hitler',²³⁸ - Avraham Stern, Menachem Begin²³⁹ and alike remained largely aloof and at a distance in Palestine.

Labor Zionism with its nominally socialist ideology was presented to Labour figures as representing a progressive and civilizing force in Palestine. In contrast, and in an explanation for the negative response of the Palestinian resistance to political Zionism, it was claimed the resistance emulated from an ignorant, backward people,

²³⁵ Kelemen, Paul (January 21, 1996: 83)

²³⁶ Johnson, Paul. (2001: 425) *A History of the Jews*, Chapter 6, *Holocaust*, (London: Phoenix Press)

²³⁷ Vladimir [Ze'ev] Jabotinski (b.1880-1940) Revisionist Zionist became leader of the right-wing Zionists after Theodor Herzl's death in 1904. Born in Odessa [Russian Empire] Ukraine, Jabotinski arrived in Palestine circa 1919-1920 to found the *Irgun*, the Jewish militant Zionist groups (1931-1948).

²³⁸ Johnson, Paul. (2001: 446)

²³⁹ Menachem Begin (b.1913-d.1992) born in Brest-Litovsk, [Russian Empire], Belarus, arrive in Palestine 1942. Israeli PM [Likud bloc]: 1977-1983; Gahal Party leader, 1965-1983.

led by a reactionary and feudal landowning class that feared their traditional control over Palestinian workers and peasants was threatened by the 'socialist' ideology and working-class solidarity of Labor Zionism. This class-struggle perception was wedded to aspects of cultural prejudice located among some Labour figures who also viewed the Palestinians (where they existed at all) generically as 'Arabs' who were invariable perceived as largely nomadic in that they were assumed to be Bedouin, and therefore insignificant as a transient people. As such, the case for political Zionism and its agenda for Palestine were supported and propagated by numerous Labour figures, as in this case, MP Charles Roden Buxton²⁴⁰ who states:

'I cannot admit the contention that the people [the Palestinians] who for the time being occupy a certain portion of the earth's surface are necessarily entitled to exclude from it others [the Zionists] who could use it better for the good of the whole.'²⁴¹

In addition, some of the more contemptible opinions of the Palestinians within Labour circles were conveyed by the pro-political Zionist related figure Henry Noel Brailsford who questioned 'The right of a handful of degenerate semi-savages to exclude millions who live by tilling the soil which they neglect.'²⁴²

The Labour Party before and after the 1917 Balfour Declaration

If the Labour Party's policy towards political Zionism before 1917 had been shaped by the *common origins* derived from the *shared socialist ideology* and *related religious philosophies* of key individuals in the party, the 1917 Balfour Declaration with its promise to facilitate a Jewish home in Palestine was to dramatically raise the spectre and development of the *essential dilemma* that this policy position represented by way of its innate contradictions.

²⁴⁰ Charles Roden Buxton (b.1875-d.1942). MP: ILP (Ashburton, 1910), LP (Accrington, 1922-1923), and (Elland, 1929-1931)

²⁴¹ Kelemen, Paul (January 21, 1996: 73) *quoting*, Charles Roden Buxton, *Daily Herald*, January 19, 1918, p.73

²⁴² Kelemen, Paul (January 21, 1996: 164) *quoting*, Henry Noel Brailsford, *A League of Nations*, (1971) [First Edition]

On the 31st October, 1917 the War Cabinet authorised Earl Balfour (Conservative Foreign Secretary in the Wartime Coalition) to issue a letter to Lord Rothschild²⁴³ (leader of the British Jewish community) expressing the British government's sympathy with the aims of political Zionism, and committing the government to the creation of a Jewish National Home in Palestine. The declaration stated:

'His Majesty's Government views with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use its best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.'²⁴⁴

"I am a Zionist"²⁴⁵ announced Balfour²⁴⁶ in a Cabinet meeting. The personal announcement - a year before the 1917 policy statement that committed the British government to facilitating a Jewish National Home in Palestine - by the author and

²⁴³ Lionel Walter Rothschild (b.1868-d.1937) of the Rothschild banking family, Liberal and Liberal Unionist MP (Aylesbury, 1899-1910), active political Zionist and close associate of Chaim Weizmann, Rothschild was the recipient of the letter from Arthur Balfour (Foreign Secretary) committing Britain to facilitate a Jewish National Home in Palestine (the Balfour Declaration, November 2, 1917).

²⁴⁴ Balfour Declaration, Arthur Balfour's letter to Lord Rothschild (November 2, 1917)

²⁴⁵ Segev, Tom (2001: 41) *One Palestine Complete: Jews and Arabs Under the British Mandate*, quoting, Chaim Weizmann's letter to Ahad Ha'am, 14-15 December, 1914, Stein, Leonard [Editor] (1975) *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, (Jerusalem: Israel University Press), Vol. VII, pp.81ff, (London: Abacus). Segev says Balfour considered 'Zionism was an inherent part of his Christian faith.' Segev, Tom (2001: 41)

²⁴⁶ Barbara Tuchman says of Balfour: 'In Balfour the motive was Biblical rather than imperial. If the Biblical culture of England can be said to have any meaning in England's redemption of Palestine from the rule of Islam, it may be epitomized in Balfour....' Tuchman, Barbara (1984: 311) *Bible and Sword: England and Palestine from the Bronze Age to Balfour*, Chapter XVII, *Culmination: The Balfour Declaration and the Palestine Mandate*, (London: Phoenix)

one of the architects of the Balfour Declaration, was not a position confined to the political elite: Lloyd George (Liberal), Winston Churchill (Liberal - Minister of Munitions 1917-1919) and Labour's own Ramsay MacDonald were but a few of the many Christian Zionist Parliamentarians who subscribed to the philosophy of political Zionism, and the Zionist movement's agenda for world Jewry and Palestine. As Churchill exclaimed:

'We think it will be good for the world, good for the Jews, British Empire, but also good for the Arabs who dwell in Palestine and we intend it to be so.... they shall share in the benefits and progress of Zionism.'²⁴⁷

Labour had made its first formal policy statement relating to political Zionism at the August 1917 party conference in the War Aims Memorandum. The policy statement came two months before the government's official publication of the November Balfour Declaration. Labour's pronouncement committed the party to the creation of a 'Free State' of Palestine into which the Jewish people may 'return' unhindered. Although the conference was specially convened to mark the success of British forces in the Middle East that included the capture of Jerusalem, the notable difference between the Labour and government position was that the Labour Party did not support the establishment of a Jewish Home or State, just the principle of Jewish right of 'return.' Although Labour's commitment to a 'return' was approved by conference to become Labour policy for the post-1918 war period, it did not include the adoption of a key objective of political Zionism - the creation of a Jewish Home or State, but by accepting the principle of 'return' Labour did effectively sanction a major tenet of political Zionism: the process by which a Jewish minority could eventually become a majority. As Joseph Gorny says:

'The British Labour movement demands for the Jews in all countries the same elementary rights of tolerance, freedom of residence and trade, and equal citizenship that ought to be extended to all the inhabitants of every nation. It

²⁴⁷ Fromkin, David (1989: 519) *A Peace to End All Peace*, quoting, Martin Gilbert (1978) *Winston S. Churchill: Companion Volume*, Volume 4, Part 2, July 1919-March 1921, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin) p.1420, (London: Penguin)

furthermore expresses the opinion that Palestine should be set free from the harsh and oppressive government of the Turk, in order that this country may form a Free State, under international guarantee, to which such of the Jewish people as desire to do so may return, and may work out their salvation free from interference by those of alien race or religion.'²⁴⁸

Labour's qualified support for the Balfour Declaration was based on the following criteria: 1) protection for Jews in all countries while not advocating directly that Jews emigrate to Palestine; 2) independence for Palestine - as a 'Free State' - from the Ottoman Empire; 3) the Jews should 'return' to Palestine only should they wish to, and not as a result of forces or duress; 4) there was no direct reference to Palestine, and no reference to political Zionism; similarly there was no direct reference to the Palestinians. It is also noteworthy that as early as 1917, Labour had consciously decided to refrain from giving direct support to a Jewish Home in Palestine; this may have reflected the view - held by prominent figures in Labour - that Judaism did not constitute a nationality, and therefore could not equate to a right to a state, and/or additionally that political Zionism was a nationalist ideology and movement. Labour's memorandum was approved in December 1917 by a Special Conference of the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress convened in London. It was later adopted by a conference of socialist and Labour Parties of Allied countries in London in February 1918. However, on the election of Labour to government in 1929 it was Balfour's Declaration that formed the basis of British policy, not the Labour memorandum. It was the Labour Leader, Ramsay MacDonald, who, having identified the fundamental contradictions - and the likely negative consequences - located in the wording of the declaration, gave the following assessment:

'A double undertaking is involved, to the Jewish people on the one hand, and to the non-Jewish population on the other; and it is the firm resolve of His Majesty's Government to give effect, in equal measure, to both parts of the

²⁴⁸ Gorny, Joseph (1983: 7) *quoting*, Schneier Levenberg (1945: 204-205) *Labour Peace Aims*, *The Times*, August 11, 1917

Declaration and to do equal justice to all sections of the population of Palestine.’²⁴⁹

Nonetheless, the reality was that Labour was also attempting to ‘reconcile the irreconcilable.’²⁵⁰ Inevitably, unable to satisfy the competing aspirations of both Palestinians and political Zionists Labour figures - and as a response to the *common origins* and the *essential dilemma*, - chose to support the political Zionist. As academic Carl Brand states:

‘Although predisposed to favour the Zionists, it [the Labour Party] honestly sought an equitable solution satisfactory to both parties. [However] Anyone who cited the two parts of the Balfour Declaration was regarded as an enemy by those who saw only one. The concept that one could be both pro-Arab and pro-Jew was inconceivable to either claimant.’²⁵¹

A central problem for Labour remained that a greater number of key figures were in support of political Zionism as opposed to those who were ignorant, unaware or uninterested, or indeed those advocating the implementation of Woodrow Wilson’s Peace Conference 14 Points which included the right of self-determination for peoples emerging from colonisation. As if the contradiction enshrined in the Balfour Declaration were not problematic enough, they were further compounded by the inclusion from the wording of the declaration into the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine in 1920.

The contradictions posed to Labour by the Balfour Declaration were not entirely exclusive: seasoned political figures, diplomats and administrators had their doubts as to not only the ‘legal’ credibility of the British position, but furthermore the moral and

²⁴⁹ Brand, Carl Fremont (1974: 144) *The British Labour Party: A Short History*, quoting, Ramsay MacDonald, Hansard, House of Commons, April 3, 1929, [237], col. 1466, (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press)

²⁵⁰ Taylor, A. J. P. (1990: 407) *English History 1914-1945*, Chapter XII, *Appeasement 1936-39, Palestine*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press)

²⁵¹ Brand, Carl Fremont (1974: 145)

ethical dimensions also. Even those at the core of the decision and policy-making expressed their reservations, as Edward Keith-Roach (British Pasha of Jerusalem) illustrates:

‘My misgivings about Palestine became deeper. The more I read the official papers of 1914-20 the sharper grew my doubts. Every standard seemed to have been sacrificed to expediency. I had known little of international or political matters. But I was certain that the standard of rectitude established by, and expected from, bankers and manufactures, was far higher.

I asked myself the questions: Is Great Britain being really honest to the Arabs? To the Jews? To herself? The questions gnawed at my conscience and refused to be silenced.’²⁵²

Foreign Policy, Socialism and Nationalism after the Great War (1914-1918)

The Great War impressed upon many in the Labour Party the need to formulate a more coherent socialist position on foreign policy, not least the fact that the working-classes had comprised most of the casualties in incomprehensible numbers.²⁵³ The basic belief in the unity of the working classes remained, but leftist intellectuals now argued that - for as long as nationalism and the nation-state remained a salient, if hopefully diminishing force - some greater authority was needed to preserve order and stability from the threats posed by capitalist elites. Thus emerged the principled internationalism of Labour leaders like Keir Hardie inspired by the writings of John A. Hobson who also influenced MP Sydney Webb and related figures Henry Noel Brailsford and Leonard Woolf,²⁵⁴ among others. Collectively they advocated a Council of All Powers, which would pursue collective security and provide the mechanism for a developing supranationalism which would eventually replace the

²⁵² Huneidi, Sahar (2001: 12) *A Broken Trust: Herbert Samuel, Zionism and the Palestinians 1920-1925*, quoting, Edward Keith-Roach (1994: 92-93) *Pasha of Jerusalem: Memoirs of a District Commissioner under the British Mandate*, (London: I. B. Tauris)

²⁵³ Douglas, Ray M. (2004: 14)

²⁵⁴ Leonard Woolf (b.1880-d.1969) was a political theorist, author, civil servant and publisher; joined the Labour Party and the Fabian Society, circa 1914.

narrow interests of state-based nationalism. The left of the party, personified in this case by Ramsay MacDonald, were clear that such a body should not simply be a Great Power Alliance but rather a genuine effort to promote the common interests of populations around the world. Not surprisingly then, the Labour Party in the post-war era would commit itself to the formulations and institution of the League of Nations as both a diplomatic and a utopian instrument.

However, it became evident during the 1920s and 1930s that at the same time Labour was becoming increasingly tied by the issues of its own nation, the party attempted to further develop its national appeal as it also became an increasing participant in the mechanisms of parliament, and latterly of government. Moreover, nationalism was not altogether reviled by the Labour Party. An instinctive empathy with underdogs led Henry Brailsford to argue:

‘The right of every nationalist to defend its liberty and its identity against conquest, is a right which Socialism has always been the first to respect and will be the last to abandon.’²⁵⁵

Brailsford articulated the party’s belief that small, weak states had a right to resist conquest and that every person had a right to national independence. The League of Nations was to be the forum for ensuring this through the collaboration and collective effort of member states. Ironically, however, it was not clear to the Labour Party at this point in time how this commitment would embroil them in the ideological dilemma that it subsequently did.

The British Mandate for Palestine²⁵⁶

²⁵⁵ Douglas, Ray M. (2004: 76) Chapter 3, *Internationalism or Anti-Nationalism?: Backbench and Backroom Visions of World Order, 1939-45*, ‘Self-Determination’ Assailed, quoting, Henry N. Brailsford, (1914: 185) *The War of Steel and Gold: A Study of the Armed Peace*, (London: Bell)

²⁵⁶ After the capture of the Ottoman Turkish Middle East in 1915-1918, Palestine came under civil rule of the British government. The formal League of Nations Mandate of Palestine was approved in July 1922 and came into effect in September 1923, ending in May 1948.

‘One of the most troublesome legacies left us by the War [1914-18] was the administration of Palestine. . . . The grave disputes between Jews and Arabs in Palestine flared up into open warfare - or rather extensive massacre, and Britain, had to draft regiment after regiment to the Holy Land.’²⁵⁷

It had been fortuitous for the Zionist movement that Britain was awarded the Mandate for Palestine by the League of Nations. If the 1917 Balfour Declaration provided the political Zionists with Britain’s ‘legal’ approval for a Jewish Home in Palestine, the 1920 League of Nations mandate provided the international ratification for the venture.²⁵⁸ However, the British administration of Palestine was beset by problems and disturbances from the onset. Riotous disturbances between Palestinians and political Zionists in Jaffa in 1920²⁵⁹ and 1921²⁶⁰ led to a British inquiry, which was

²⁵⁷ Clynes, John Robert (1937: 243-246) Chapter XIX

²⁵⁸ The inherent contradictions located in the text of the Balfour Declaration were virtually identical in the terms of the mandate. As Malcolm Yapp says: ‘Article 2 stated that the mandatory power should establish “such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish national home.” Article 6 obliged the mandatory power to facilitate Jewish immigration and encourage settlement by Jews on the land. Both of these articles also contained provisions that the rights of other sections of the population [the Palestinians] should not be prejudiced but the thrust of the mandate was plainly towards the fulfillment of the Zionist programme.’ Yapp, Malcolm E. (1996: 124) [Second Edition] *The Near East Since the First World War: A History to 1995*, Chapter 4, *Palestine and Transjordan to 1950*, (Harlow: Longman)

²⁵⁹ The 1920 riots (April 4-7) occurred during the Nebi Musa (Spring Festival), initiated to ensure a Muslim presence in Jerusalem during the Christian Easter pilgrimage to the Holy Land. A Commission of Inquiry - the *Palin Commission* - (which was never published) attributed the violence to Palestinian frustrations over the non-fulfillment of promises of independence and fear of political and economic consequences of political Zionism.

²⁶⁰ The 1921 Jaffa Riots (May 1-7) resulted from an attempt to prevent the Jewish Communist Party (later Palestine Communist Party) from holding a May Day parade from Jaffa to Tel-Aviv. The Haycraft Report concluded the riots resulted from Arab aggression but that the political Zionist was not doing enough to ‘mitigate the Arab’s apprehensions’ regarding the Zionists agenda for Palestine.

published as the *Statement of British Policy in Palestine* (the Churchill or British White Paper) of 1922.²⁶¹

Winston Churchill - a staunch Christian pro-political Zionist - had been 'surprised' to learn from Herbert Samuel (British High Commissioner to Palestine) that the 'Arabs had been provoked to riot by a hard core of Jewish Communists.'²⁶² However, Ramsay MacDonald and Labour had been moved to a re-assessment of their policy on political Zionism and Palestine as a result of the first direct contact between a serving Labour leader and a Palestinian political figure during the visit to London by a deputation of the Supreme National Committee of Palestinians led by [Musa Kazem Pasha] Jamal al-Husseini²⁶³ (July 1921). Husseini's presentation of the Arab/Palestinian position in Palestine made a favourable impression upon some Labour members, and in conjunction with the report of the government inquiry led to Labour's decision to re-affirm its position on the Balfour Declaration and the mandate, but with the added provision of a dual emphasis on both 'Jews and Arabs'; as Labour's Chief Whip and pro-political Zionist MP, Arthur Henderson stated:

'The Labour Party believes that the responsibility of the British people in Palestine should be fulfilled to the utmost of their power. It believes that these responsibilities may be fulfilled so as to ensure the economic prosperity, political autonomy and spiritual freedom of both Jew and Arabs in Palestine.'²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ The Churchill White Paper, Command Paper 1700, July 3, 1922, was named after Winston Churchill, Secretary of State for the Colonies, February 13, 1921-October 19, 1922

²⁶² Gilbert, Martin (2007: 73) *Churchill and the Jews*, Chapter 7, *Building on the Balfour Declaration*, (London: Simon & Schuster)

²⁶³ Jamal al-Husseini (b.1893-d.1982) a Palestinian politician he became Secretary to the Palestinian Arab Action Committee Executive in Palestine (1921-1934) and the Supreme Muslim Council 1928-30.

²⁶⁴ Gorny, Joseph (1982: 39) *quoting*, Arthur Henderson, *Statement on Behalf of the Labour Party*, November 1922, Schneier Levenberg, (1945: 207)

The Palestinian-political Zionist riots in Jaffa 1920 - what Josiah Wedgwood called the 'pogroms in Palestine'²⁶⁵ - and those that followed in 1921 and 1929, demonstrated that the indigenous Palestinians were apparently far from being grateful for the claimed 'benefits' of political Zionist colonisation and enterprise; indeed they were actively and broadly opposed to its imposed activities. The advent of Palestinian revolt forcibly challenged the claims of early Labour related pro-political Zionists, such as Henry N. Brailsford, MPs Charles Buxton, and Josiah Wedgwood, that the Palestinian Arabs had neither a distinct identity nor an attachment to the land, or the earlier Zionist assertion that Palestine was empty - with the exception of the Bedouin.

For Labour and successive British governments, the 1922 Churchill White Paper²⁶⁶ formed the official basis of policy in Palestine for nearly a decade, and was stated as being the British government's interpretation of the Balfour Declaration. Although the primary purpose had been to clarify the British government's position on the Balfour Declaration and to placate the Arabs after the 1920 riots, the paper was rejected by the Palestine Arabs and accepted by the political Zionists (the Zionists acceptance was primarily based on the fact that the paper had not abandoned the concept of a Jewish Home in Palestine after the disturbances of 1920 and 1922).

With the exception of a Palestinian General Strike in March 1925 (called to commemorate the visit of Lord Balfour residing over the inauguration of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem) there was then relative calm in Palestine for several years. Under the protection of the British, Jewish/Zionist settlement in Palestine thrived in the period from 1924-1928; the period which included the first Labour (minority)

²⁶⁵ Wedgwood, Josiah C. (1940: 116) Chapter IX, *An Ishmaelite in Clover*

²⁶⁶ Following 'apprehensions, which are entertained by both sections of the Arab [Palestinian] and by sections of the Jewish [Zionist] population' of Palestine, resulting from the precise meaning of the 1917 Balfour Declaration, Winston Churchill (Colonial Secretary) published the 1922 (June 3rd) White Paper with the specific purpose of clarifying the precise terms of the Balfour Declaration. The key clarification and thus affirmation of the governments policy intension stated that the Jewish National Home should be founded '*in Palestine*' and that '*Palestine as a whole should not be converted into a Jewish National Home.*'

government (January to November 1924). However, as David Watkins²⁶⁷ notes, the relative calm in Palestine did not prevent the first voice of dissent within the parliamentary party over Labour's support for political Zionism being recorded in a 1924 parliamentary debate. The Labour MP Dr Thomas S B. Williams²⁶⁸ who had personal experience of Palestine questioned the morality and logic of Labour's policy position stating:

'The Palestinians were already in their national home and that it was most unjust to subordinate their rights to those of people whose national home it had never been.'²⁶⁹

The 'profound moral malaise'²⁷⁰ posed for Labour also found resonance in the wider Arab context of western colonialism in the Middle East. As with Williams, Arab figures had long been able to distinguish between the indigenous Jews of Palestine and the Jewish immigrants from elsewhere. As Abdul Azzam²⁷¹ illustrates:

²⁶⁷ David Watkins (b.1925) MP: (Consett, 1966-1983). A co-founder, chairperson (1974) and Treasurer of the Labour Middle East Council (LMEC) (est. 1969), and a member, Executive Committee, Joint Vice-Chair, Joint Chair, and Director (1983-1990) of the 'All Party' Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding (CAABU) (est. 05.07.1967). An author and pamphleteer on Middle Eastern history and affairs, Watkins is viewed 'internationally as an acknowledged authority on the Middle East,' the British Labour Party's relationship with political Zionism, the State of Israel, the Palestinians, and the question of Palestine. Widely travelled in the Middle East, Watkins remains an active speaker and lobbyist. Watkins, David (1992: back cover) *Palestine: An Escapable Duty*, (London: Alhani International Books)

²⁶⁸ Dr Thomas Samuel Beauchamp Williams (b.1877-d.1927) MP: (Kennington, 1923-1924)

²⁶⁹ Watkins, David (1996: 112) *Seventeen Years in Obscurity: Memoirs from the Back Benches*, Chapter 6, *The Middle East*, quoting, Dr Thomas S. B. Williams, Hansard, July 29, 1924, cols 1951-1958, (Lewes: The Book Guild)

²⁷⁰ Crossman, Richard (1960: 59)

²⁷¹ Abdul Rahman Hassan Azzam (b.1893-d.1976) Egyptian diplomat, nationalist, pan-Arabist and the first Arab League Secretary General, (1945-1952)

‘Our brother has gone to Europe and to the West and come back something else. He has come back a Russian Jew, a Polish Jew, a German Jew, an English Jew. He has come back with a totally different conception of things, western and not eastern.’²⁷²

Azzam continues:

‘The Zionist, the new Jew, wants to dominate, and he pretends that he has got a particular civilizing mission with which he returns to a backward, degenerate race in order to put the elements of progress into an area which has no progress. Well, that has been the pretension of every power that wanted to colonise and aimed at domination. The excuse has always been that the people are backward and that he has got a human mission to put them forward The Arabs simply stand and say “No”. We are not reactionary and we are not backward. We are not going to allow ourselves to be controlled either by great nations of small nations of dispersed nations.’²⁷³

Despite the general support in the party for Labour’s pro-political Zionism memorandum, not all views were unequivocally supportive. As the bi-national state concept began to gain favour among Labour figures, the British political Zionist began to assert pressure in favour of their own cause: a Jewish state in Palestine.

At the 1928 Second Commonwealth Labour Conference in London, during the debate on Self-Determination for Colonized Peoples, *Poale Zion*’s Yitzhak Ben-Zvi²⁷⁴ and Dov Hoz²⁷⁵ argued that Palestine was an exceptional case requiring ‘national

²⁷² Crossman, Richard (1960: 59-60) *quoting*, Azzam Pasha (Secretary to the Arab League) Anglo-Commission, Cairo, 1945

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, (1960: 59-60)

²⁷⁴ Yitzhak Ben-Zvi (b.1884-d.1963) historian and leading figure in the labor Zionism movement, born in Poltava, Ukraine arrived in Palestine 1907, and became President of Israel (1952-1963).

²⁷⁵ Dov Hoz [Hos] (b.1894-d.1940) was a leading figure in the labor Zionism movement and the *Haganah* [Jewish paramilitary organisation in mandate Palestine]; born in Orsha, [Russian Empire] Belarus, arrived in Palestine 1906.

autonomy' and that independence at a time when Jews were in a tiny minority would actually threaten the progress of Jewish labour and political Zionism in Palestine. 'Concluding it was vital to foster further relations with Labour through information, and personal contacts'²⁷⁶ in order to assist in facilitating this challenge to autonomy, *Poale Zion* dispatched Hoz to Britain in order to promote more active Labour-Zionist relationship on the basis that the socialist Zionism agenda in Palestine was being jeopardized by concessions to the Palestinian Arabs and their leadership.

In June 1929, Labour formed its second minority government, which was to last until August 1931. During this period, Labour's relations with the political Zionists were to decline as a result of the emerging realities and the growing recognition within the party of the contradictions posed by political Zionist colonisation of Palestine and Labour's socialist ideological principles. Something of this shift in relations is captured by David Ben-Gurion, the Leader of the political Zionism movement and the Federation of Jewish Labor (the *Histadrut*) in Palestine, as he conveys a survey of British political Parties and their pro-political Zionist credentials in the period from 1917 to 1931:

'Of the three parties of the British Parliament, the Labour Party was the friendliest to the Zionist cause and the most faithful to the Balfour Declaration. The heads of the Party - Ramsay MacDonald, Arthur Henderson, George Lansbury, and others - were loyal supporters of the Zionist idea.

It is extremely strange, therefore, that the most serious and painful attacks on the Zionist enterprise took place in the 1930s during the second Labour government, headed by the same MacDonald who had published enthusiastic articles [*A Socialist in Palestine*] praising Zionism after his visit to the Land of Israel [Palestine] in 1922.'²⁷⁷

²⁷⁶ Gorny, Joseph (1983: 42) *quoting*, Yitzhak Ben-Zvi

²⁷⁷ Ben-Gurion, David (1971: 44) *Israel: A Personal History*, Chapter 1, *The Rebirth of a Nation, After Centuries of Pioneering, a State is Established*, (New York: Funk & Wagnalls)

The change in Ramsay MacDonald and Labour's position on political Zionism arose from a number of factors, not least of which was a series of very real challenges to the British mandate government in Palestine itself, for which the Labour government was now responsible.

On August 30th, 1929 Beatrice Webb wrote: 'It seems that the Labour Party has a particular talent for foreign affairs.'²⁷⁸ The previous day the most violent riots to date had occurred in Palestine which were about to plunge Labour - and Beatrice's husband Sidney Webb (Lord Passfield) - into one of the most taxing and persistent issues for the coming three decades.

The 1929 Palestinian-political Zionist riots arose once more as a result of a Zionist demonstration²⁷⁹ and a dispute in Jerusalem over the Wailing Wall. The disturbances spread to Hebron and Safed. Although the trigger for the violence had been a religious based confrontation, the underlying tensions were the result of Palestinian and Zionists agitation concerning the establishment of a Jewish Home in Palestine. The British government ordered a Commission of Inquiry - the *Sir Walter Shaw Commission of Enquiry* - which recommended a further investigation into the specific question of Jewish immigration to Palestine, the Hope-Simpson Royal Commission (1930). This was followed with a further enquiry into immigration which led to the 1930 Passfield White Paper²⁸⁰ restricting Jewish immigration to Palestine's economic absorptive capacity and Ramsay MacDonald's letter ignominiously withdrawing the

²⁷⁸ MacKenzie, Norman [Editor] (1978: 318) *The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb: Volume 3, Pilgrimage 1912-1947*, Beatrice Webb to Elizabeth Haldane, August 30, 1929, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

²⁷⁹ The 1929 riots were triggered when 'a group of [Zionist] youths, contravening the orders of the Jewish leadership, had marched to the Western Wall, unfurling a Zionist flag and made fiery speeches.' Kramnick, Isaac & Sheerman, Barry (1979: 274) *Harold Laski: A Life on the Left*, (London: Hamish Hamilton)

²⁸⁰ The Passfield White Paper - *Palestine, Statement of Policy by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom*, Command Paper 3692, October 1, 1930, replaced the 1922 Churchill White Paper as formal statement of policy for Palestine.

policy in the face of Zionist pressure. Labour MP Richard "Dick" Crossman²⁸¹ said of the events:

'The first sign of this recognition that the Mandate could not work was the British reaction to the pogroms of 1929. As became normal in such circumstances, a Commission was duly sent to Palestine and Sir John Hope Simpson reported in 1930.

Even before the report was issued, the Labour government publicly declared its intension to suspend immigration, an intention confirmed when Sidney Webb, by now Lord Passfield, issued his notorious White Paper. This was one of the rare occasions when Chaim Weizmann's liking for the British ruling class destroyed his judgment. As soon as he had succeeded in forcing Ramsay MacDonald to withdraw the White Paper, he assumed that he had permanently defeated the British enemies of Zionism.'²⁸²

Political Zionists were concerned by Labour's response to the riots. To the political Zionists, the events of August represented definitive evidence that only a separate Jewish entity in Palestine would prevent further strife, a position the Zionists assumed Labour would share. But the response of Labour was seen to reflect an increasing awareness among Labour figures as to the complexity of the situation in Palestine, a growing suspicion as to the extent of political Zionist aspirations and the true character of the movement, and increasing awareness of the resistance to the British and political Zionists by the Palestinians.

The 1930 Passfield White Paper marked what has been termed 'Labour's apparent hostility to Zionism.'²⁸³ The paper stated the government's policy on the basis of the Shaw and Simpson's Reports which only served to underlined the concerns of the Zionist movement that Labour and the British were too committed to the dual 'Jew' and 'Arab' aspects of the Balfour Declaration and mandate requirements. The key

²⁸¹ Richard "Dick" Crossman (b.1907-d.1974) MP: (Coventry East, 1945-1974)

²⁸² Crossman, Richard (1960: 64)

²⁸³ MacKenzie, Norman & MacKenzie, Jeanne [Editors] (1985: 168)

references in the 1930 paper incorporated the position that the British government had a dual commitment to both peoples; that the primary obligation towards the Jews related to the Jews in Palestine (not those of the Diaspora, as emphasized in the 1922 White Paper); that the scale of Jewish immigration to Palestine would depend on the economic position of the entire population; and crucially, that there was no room for mass Jewish immigration to Palestine (without negating the status of the existing non-Jewish community).

Labour MP - Hugh Dalton - conveys what comes close to political satire as the controversy over the 1930 Passfield White Paper expanded into a wave of protests from Labour MPs in support of political Zionism. As a young, newly elected MP, Dalton observed the results of what he went on to describe as this 'Palestine fuss',²⁸⁴ at a private meeting in the family home. His 'Uncle',²⁸⁵ - pro-political Zionist Arthur Henderson (Foreign Secretary) - attempted to address the immediate impact of the paper by establishing a Parliamentary Committee to review the practice and policy of the Cabinet and Foreign Office amid the resulting difficulties of negotiating between the Zionist leaders and Sidney Webb:

'Uncle raised Palestine urgently. The Jews all over the world, and in Whitechapel particularly, where a by-election is pending, are off their heads with indignation. Passfield, Uncle and King Albert are appointed on a committee to go into the question and, if possible, meet the Zionist leaders. The Cabinet also decided that, in future, all Colonial Office pronouncements on Palestine are to be submitted to the Foreign Office before publication. But this is shutting the stable door after the horse.'²⁸⁶

Dalton continues:

²⁸⁴ Pimlott, Ben [Editor] (1986 [a]: 166) *The Political Diary of Hugh Dalton 1918-40, 1945-60*, (London: Cape)

²⁸⁵ "Uncle" was Arthur Henderson's political nickname; there was no family relationship between Henderson and Hugh Dalton.

²⁸⁶ Pimlott, Ben [Editor] (1986 [a]: 126) *quoting*, Hugh Dalton, Thursday November 6, 1930

‘10.30 I find Uncle closeted with Weizmann and [Lewis] Namier.²⁸⁷ He has taken charge of the Cabinet Committee on Palestine and is negotiating with the Jews, who won’t meet [Sidney] Webb [Lord Passfield] or Colonial Office officials.

10.50 The Jews are in the Ambassador’s waiting room examining a suggested formula. Ronald comes in and says that Passfield wants to see Uncle urgently . . . Uncle says, ‘Tell him I will meet him in the Court outside at 11.20 and walk down to the House with him.’ Obviously he mustn’t come here and run into the Jews in the passage.

10.55 Ronald returns and announces that ‘Lord Passfield is here.’ Consternation! The Jews are still in the waiting room, but may emerge at any minute. Passfield is put in Selby’s room down the side passage, to wait till they have gone. French farce scene! In the end no collision occurs.’²⁸⁸

This quote demonstrates the close personal relations between key Labour figures and prominent Jewish exponents of the political Zionist cause, the most important of which was undoubtedly Chaim Weizmann.

Despite the eventual withdrawal of the Passfield Paper (post February 1931), the Zionist movement suffered a severe shock and lost a great deal of faith in both British policy generally and its relations with Labour more specifically. Nonetheless, Labour

²⁸⁷ Sir Lewis Bernstein Namier (b.1888-d.1960), a Polish born English historian (Professor, Manchester University), became a political Zionist in 1920; his 1927 pamphlet directed his ‘emotional fascinations’ and ‘transfused his thoughts on Zionism’ stating ‘Great Britain, world Jewry, and the Palestinian Arabs would all benefit if Palestine were incorporated into the British Empire as a Seventh Dominion. He advocated the scheme as the only one able to foster a healthy symbiosis between the land’s two distinct populations.’ Julia Namier (1971: 201-202) *Lewis Namier: A Biography*, Chapter 11, *Consorting Together, 1924-1929*, (London: Oxford University Press) Namier was Chaim Weizmann’s close associate until relations soured after Namier’s conversion from Judaism to Anglicanism.

²⁸⁸ Pimlott, Ben [Editor] (1986 [a]: 128-129) *quoting*, Hugh Dalton, Wednesday November 12, 1930



pro-political Zionist figures continued to influence Labour policy, none less so than Henry Snell MP,²⁸⁹ who had been a member of the 1929 Palestine Commission and who was to go on to assume a crucial role on behalf of political Zionism in later years.

Henry Snell, described as a 'strong ethical socialist,'²⁹⁰ stated his role on the 1929 Commission was the 'most thrilling event of my life, and I shall always regard my visit to the Holy Land as a rare and rich experience.'²⁹¹ Snell's memoirs provide a vivid demonstration of the combined role of a Christian education and faith, a socialist ideology and poverty-stricken working-class background, and how these factors came to influence his response to an official visit to Palestine, and his subsequent influence on Labour Party policy towards Palestine. Echoing the 1922 romantic style of Ramsay MacDonald, Snell wrote as he approached Jerusalem:

'Only twice in my life have I been overcome by a sense of awe on approaching a great city. One of these occasions was when the train slowly emerged from the hills, and I caught my first glimpse of the walls of Jerusalem. Then through my own emotions, I realized something of the ecstasy felt by countless pilgrims and crusaders as from the summit of Mizpah they first saw the walls of the Holy City. I, too, almost cried aloud: My feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.'²⁹²

While the Commission's Majority Report of March 12, 1930 recommended restrictions on Jewish immigration and land purchases, Snell submitted his own Minority Report stating that he not only disagreed with the main findings of the majority report, but also asserted that the Zionist's activities far from being economically detrimental to Palestine, it was in fact advantageous and beneficial.

²⁸⁹ Henry Snell [Baron Snell 1931] (b.1865-d.1944) MP: (Woolwich East, 1922-1931)

²⁹⁰ MacKenzie, Norman & MacKenzie, Jeanne [Editors] (1985: 212)

²⁹¹ Snell, Henry (1938: 237) *Men, Movements and Myself*, Chapter XV, *Work in Parliament*, (London: J. M. Dent & Sons)

²⁹² *Ibid.*, (1938: 171) Chapter XI, *The Ethical Movement: Switzerland and Italy*

‘I had the misfortune to arrive at conclusions concerning the evidence which was presented to us, which my colleagues did not share. . . . But they did not see the problem as I saw it. . . . I took a more serious view than they did of the responsibility of the Arabs and Moslem leaders for the campaign of incitement which had preceded and, as I believe, provoked the disturbances, and I had no doubt in my mind that the fears and passions of the Arab peoples had been awakened and inflamed for purely political ends.’²⁹³

The 1930 Passfield White Paper based on the majority report of the Commission, represented a change in the British Labour government’s policy, and generated not only the first major political crisis between the Labour Party and the Zionist movement, but the first significant division with the Labour Cabinet and wider party.

The pro-political Zionist revolt against the Labour leadership was remarkably successful in achieving a decisive and swift reversal of policy. By February 1931 their efforts had born fruit in the shape of what was christened by the Palestinians as the ‘Black Letter.’ Whilst the letter from Ramsay MacDonald to Chaim Weizmann (February 13, 1931) reaffirmed the government's right to control Jewish immigration in relation to the economic absorptive capacity of Palestine, the public confirmation that the Labour government would honour the commitments of the Balfour Declaration and Palestine mandate to ‘facilitate Jewish immigration and to encourage close settlement by Jews on the land’ was viewed by the political Zionists as a abrogation of the 1930 Passfield White Paper, and the restoration of the British commitment to creating a Jewish entity in Palestine.²⁹⁴

²⁹³ Ibid., (1938: 238-239)

²⁹⁴ Although Ramsay MacDonald’s letter was read to Parliament, recorded in Hansard, and widely considered as a rescinding of the White Paper - clarification that Jewish immigration would not be restricted was viewed as a reversal - the explicit re-emphasis upon protecting the rights of the Arabs (enshrined in the Balfour Declaration and terms of the Palestine mandate) was retained; the re-iteration of the Hope-Simpson investigation into the 1929 riots identifying the employment by political Zionism of only Jewish labour was damaging the economic development of the Arab population was further evidence for Labour of the non-socialist aspects of political Zionism and its consequences for Palestine.

This went a long way to averting a major confrontation between the Labour Party and the Zionist movement and marked the point when Ramsay MacDonald finally ceded to the political Zionist concept of a separate Jewish entity in Palestine. It was also a powerful example of the ability of the political Zionists to influence Labour policy at the highest levels.

The Whitechapel By-Election of 1930

By now, there was a growing realisation among Labour figures that there was not only a resident, distinct Arab people in Palestine, but also that political Zionism and its agenda for Palestine as a socialist venture was at best questionable, and at worst entirely in error. The *shared socialist ideology* included apparently contradictory components. Despite the progressive elements in socialist Zionism, and the emancipating aspects of political Zionism, the Zionist movement was increasingly looking like a nationalist and colonial organ that was determined to apply its agenda for creating a Jewish State in Palestine despite consequent Palestinian exclusion and dispossession. The tensions of this contradiction came to the fore in the Whitechapel By-Election of December 1930.

As the academic historian Allan Bullock says, what would 'normally have appeared a safe constituency for a Labour candidate was transformed by the publication of the government's White Paper.'²⁹⁵ The socialist Zionist party in Britain - *Poale Zion* - decided to protest against the White Paper by supporting the Liberal candidate - Barnett Janner - and the political Zionist and Liberal leader Lloyd George, who was committed to open immigration to Palestine. *Poale Zion* in association with other Zionist and Jewish groups campaigned for the Liberal candidate among the large Jewish communities in Whitechapel and its neighbouring district St. George, and helped to establish the Palestine Protest Committee. Although Labour retained the seat, albeit with a much reduced majority, and while factors like unemployment, related to the Wall Street crash (1929), played a role, that reduction certainly assisted in Labour losing the seat at the subsequent General Election of 1931.

²⁹⁵ Bullock, Alan (1960: 455-456) *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin: Volume 1, Trade Union Leader 1881-1940*, (London: Heinemann)

The Whitechapel example held many lessons for a number of key Labour figures (not least MPs Sidney Webb and Ramsay Macdonald, but also the young Clement Attlee²⁹⁶ and Ernest Bevin).²⁹⁷ It established that when Labour and political Zionist interests diverged, the political Zionists were not only prepared to challenge Labour in debate, but were able to achieve a very reasonable degree of success in influencing the British Jewish communities to abandon their traditional pro-Labour voting loyalties. Far from being socialist, for the political Zionists the nationalist agenda triumphed over class interests; also, there were similar Jewish communities in Glasgow, Leeds and Manchester as well as elsewhere in London which were as important, particularly at a time when local and national elections were close fought affairs.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁶ Clement Attlee had been working in the Jewish communities of East London and took part in the election campaign. The Labour candidate - James Henry Hall - had been sponsored by the TGWU and personally supported by Ernest Bevin, the union's local leader.

²⁹⁷ Dov Hoz [Hos] dispatched from Palestine, was able to convince Ernest Bevin, General Secretary to the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) with fifteen sponsored Labour MPs in the Parliament, to support the Zionist position against the 1930 White Paper by informing Ramsay MacDonald that 'his boys' would vote against the Bill; as a minority government reliant upon Liberal support - led by the staunch pro-Zionist Sir Herbert Samuel - MacDonald had little choice but to reverse government and Labour Policy by appointing a staunch pro-political Zionist, Arthur Henderson to head a Cabinet Committee with a remit to re-interpret the paper's recommendations into a pro-political Zionist statement.

²⁹⁸ While the significance of the Jewish vote is largely confined to local elections, the importance is increased during closely fought general election: February 1950 (Labour majority 5), October 1964 (Labour majority 4), and October 74 (Labour majority 3). According to Ross, a point not lost on New Labour in 1997: 'the Jewish community told them [New Labour leadership] that unless you change your policy on the Middle East and became more balanced then the Jewish community would keep voting Conservative. Now I can tell you there are 31 seats that can change just like that if people vote a certain way. Stephen Twigg (Labour MP, Enfield Southgate, 1997-2005), how did he beat Michael Portillo? Because the Greek-Cypriote vote came behind him. There are some constituencies where there is a large enough Jewish community to swing the vote: they are mainly Leeds, London obviously, probably Manchester.' Ross, Ernest (16.09.2004: 7) *Interview: Ross-Nelson, Portcullis House, London*

The Whitechapel by-election might in fact have been more symbolic than genuinely threatening for relations between Labour and British political Zionists. Academic Paul Kelemen argues that the natural dispersal of the Jewish communities meant the actual potential for a 'Jewish vote' affecting Labour policy towards Palestine was 'minimal.'²⁹⁹ He also states that the Whitechapel event was more likely an isolated case and a high-water mark for *Poale Zion*, particularly in terms of its political influence upon Labour policy.

The Proposal to Partition Palestine 1937

As Labour moved back into opposition in 1931, profound and far-reaching events on the international stage demanded new responses. The German 1933 General Election results that brought Adolf Hitler's National Socialists to power were in many ways a world away from Palestine. Fascist regimes had come to power in Italy (1922)³⁰⁰ and Spain (1939)³⁰¹ along with the ascendancy of the anti-Semitic Joseph Stalin following Lenin's death in 1924, all factors contributing to the flight of Jews seeking safety in the United States, Western Europe and elsewhere; although relatively few sought refuge in Palestine,³⁰² this large influx of Jewish immigration to Palestine became a major factor in the Palestinian revolt.³⁰³

²⁹⁹ Kelemen, Paul (January 21, 1996: 84)

³⁰⁰ Benito Mussolini regime was not initially anti-Semitic, but under increasing Nazi influence Mussolini issued the *Manifesto of Race* (July 1939) that removed Italian citizenship from Jewish Italians prompting a rebuke for the fascist leader from Pope Pius XXII.

³⁰¹ Although Jews fought the Fascist regime in Spain during the Spanish Civil War, anti-Semitism was not an official policy of the Fascist leader Francisco Franco; Spanish Jews, and Jewish refugees from Europe and elsewhere were protected.

³⁰² Prior to 1920 Jewish immigration to Palestine barely exceeded 5,000 annually; between 1924-1925 and 1932-1939 the figure exceeded 10,000, and 30,000 during 1925, 1933-1936; an exact correlation with the rise of Fascism, Stalinism and Nazism in Europe and Russia. See: Al-Hassan, Khaled (1992: 100) *Grasping the Nettle of Peace: A Senior Palestinian Figure Speaks Out*, Appendix 16. *The Influx of Jewish Immigrants into Palestine, 1919-42*, (London: Saqi Books)

³⁰³ The Palestinian Revolt (1936-1939) began as a general strike in Jaffa (Yaffa) in response to the killing of Sheik Izz ad-Din al-Qassam (1935), and a significant increase in Jewish immigration and land purchases as a result of the Nazi persecution of Jews.

The 1937 Peel Commission (or Palestine Royal Commission) of Enquiry (November 11, 1936 - January 18, 1937) into the further violent disturbances in Palestine after the beginning of what became the 1936-1939 Palestinian revolt came to represent a major advancement in the political Zionist cause, although it did not seem so at the time to the Zionist themselves. The Commission led by the Conservative Earl Peel (William Wellesley Peel) concluded that changes to the terms of the Mandate for Palestine were required in order to address the conflict between Jews and Arabs. The 'Jews and Arabs' were unable to live peaceably together and the only option, the report concluded, was Partition.³⁰⁴

The report recommended the mandate be eventually abolished. And that apart from Jerusalem (determined as an International City under British protection) and a land corridor from Jerusalem to the Mediterranean, the remaining land was to be divided between the 'Arabs' and 'Jews.' The Partition proposal for the first time gave the political Zionists the defined boundaries of a Jewish National Home. The political Zionists were divided themselves on whether to accept the Partition Plan, ultimately opting to continue negotiations; the Palestinian representative delegation rejected the proposal. It was in this post-1937 period that Richard Crossman stated 'Tiny Palestine was a battlefield now of contending world forces,'³⁰⁵ which while exaggerated, given Europe's slide towards WWII, has strong resonances particularly as both Britain and what became the Axis powers sought to secure the wider Middle Eastern region.

³⁰⁴ In a pre-cursor to the Rita Hinden school of thought (See: Chapter 1), Susan Lawrence, sub-committee member to the Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions, directed a memorandum in January 1937 on Palestine policy (just as the Peel Commission was concluding its inquiry), stating the growing economic disparity between Jews and Arabs in Palestine resulted from neglect by the mandatory administration, and a substantial increase in investment in health services, education and agricultural modernisation would improve the economic condition of Arab peasants. See: Lepskin, Fred Lennis (1986: 50). Susan Lawrence (b.1871-d.1947) MP: (East Ham North, 1923-1924, 1926-1931); Chair of the Labour Party and NEC member, 1929-1930, was a contemporary of R. MacDonald and A. Henderson, a Fabian and active in the Women's Section of the Labour Party. Lepskin says Lawrence was a 'very effective Zionist partisan.' Lepskin, Fred Lennis (1986: 17)

³⁰⁵ Crossman, Richard (1960: 65)

During this developing conflict the political Zionist cause was ardently pressed within the Labour Party by leading figures such as Hugh Dalton and the Labour-related figure Harold Joseph Laski.³⁰⁶ The longevity of Dalton's political career (1925-1951) and high office (Chancellor of the Exchequer 1945-1947) spanned many key events in Labour-political Zionist relations; much of that career was recorded in memoir and extensive volumes of diary accounts. Dalton's biographer - Ben Pimlott - considered him to have been the 'firmest supporter of Zionism within the Labour leadership.'³⁰⁷ Dalton's activities were conducted amid a number of contemporary pro-political Zionist Labour colleagues, notably, Arthur Creech Jones,³⁰⁸ Susan Lawrence, William Gillies (Head of Labour's International Department and Overseas Secretary), Morgan Phillips and Arthur Greenwood.³⁰⁹

Dalton's interest in political Zionism began while he was an economics lecturer at the London School of Economics (LSE) (1919-1924/1931-1935), of which Dalton said of his students, 'A surprisingly large number, considering its small population, came from Palestine.'³¹⁰ ³¹¹ Notwithstanding the energetic support of key Labour figures like Dalton for political Zionism, and despite the fact, as Brand notes, that 'In Britain

³⁰⁶ Harold Joseph Laski (b.1893-d.1950) rejected political Zionism in 1911 on the basis that Jewish nationalism contradicted his Socialist beliefs. He assisted the Zionists only to further British-American relations, and as Michael Newman says because 'support for Jewish settlement was, at the time [c.1925], the more common position in the Labour Party . . . he therefore believed that he was adopting a socialist position.' Newman, Michael (1993: 125) The 1929 riots acted to nudge Laski further towards supporting political Zionism.

³⁰⁷ Pimlott, Ben (1985: 388) *Hugh Dalton*, (London: Jonathan Cape)

³⁰⁸ Arthur Creech Jones (b.1891-d.1964) MP: (Shipley, 1935-1950) and (Wakefield, 1954-1964); Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1946-1950; and Under-Secretary of Stated for the Colonies, 1945-1946.

³⁰⁹ Arthur Greenwood (b.1880-d.1954) MP: (Wakefield, 1932-1954); Deputy Leader, 1935-1945.

³¹⁰ Dalton, Hugh (1953: 111) *Call Back Yesterday: Memoirs 1887-1931*, (London: Frederick Muller)

³¹¹ Hugh Dalton notes: 'When some thirty years later I visited what was now the State of Israel, I found old students of mine occupying many key positions. Moshe Sharett . . . was now Foreign Minister of Israel.' Dalton, Hugh (1953: 111)

Jewish voices were numerous and influential; Arabs there were negligible,³¹² there was continuing evidence of discontent within Labour over the prevailing sympathy for political Zionism at that time. As Brand again says:

‘In spite of generous sympathy for the Jews, however, there was reluctance to accede to extreme Zionist demands at Arab expense.’^{313 314}

The result of this Labour disquiet meant that the passage of the partition policy through Parliament was a messy affair that divided parties, the government and opposition alike. As a young Harold Wilson conveys:

‘The main debate ended at midnight. Churchill then rose to move his amendment. Clement Attlee for the Labour Opposition sought to prevent a vote being taken. His objection to the Churchill amendment was that it would seem to bind the House to a decision ‘here and now’ to accept partition.

It was not a Party matter, simply one of finding the best way of dealing with the issue ‘in the interests of the Arab people, the Jewish people and the whole world.’³¹⁵

³¹² Brand, Carl Fremont (1974: 144)

³¹³ Ibid., (1974: 144)

³¹⁴ There were other questioning voices in immediate partition period: the Scottish trade unionist and socialist Alexander Gossip (b.1862-d.1952) General Secretary, National Amalgamated Furnishing Trades Association (NAFTA), claimed that while the ‘interests of the Jewish and Arab workers in Palestine are identical’ Knox, William [Editor] (1984: 125) *Scottish Labour Leaders: A Biographical Dictionary*, quoting, Alexander Gossip, Labour Party Conference, Edinburgh, 1936, (Labour Party Report (1936), 220, (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing) the government was ‘using these Jewish comrades who are being persecuted so unmercifully by Fascism at the present time’ in order to further the Government’s own strategic and imperial interests. ‘The Arabs have been in Palestine for over 1,000 years. Their consent has not been asked.’ Knox, William [Editor] (1984: 125) *quoting*, Alexander Gossip

³¹⁵ Wilson, Harold (1981: 85) *The Chariot of Israel: Britain, America and the State of Israel*, (London: Weidenfeld, Nicolson & Michael Joseph)

For some Labour figures however, the 1937 White Paper represented nothing less than a “Middle Eastern Munich,”³¹⁶ for which the new Labour leader drew much criticism.

In 1935, and for the next two decades, the baton of the Labour Party leadership had been passed to Clement Attlee. As Labour’s newly appointed Campaign Manager for the East London borough in the 1920s, Attlee experienced the realities of diverse Jewish constituents in the socially deprived environment of the capital’s East End.³¹⁷ It was at this time that Attlee displayed his stiff opposition to the 1922 Aliens Bill, which he viewed as an attempt to prevent Jewish refugees from emigrating to Britain. However, although Attlee had links with the British Jewish community, he never accepted that Judaism - as a religious faith - constituted a national identity, as claimed by the political Zionism movement. As such, Attlee could never accept the principle of a Jewish State, even though he was content to support Jewish immigration to Palestine on the historical basis that Palestine was an important focus of Jewish religion and culture.

In his first major act involving Labour-political Zionist relations 1935, Attlee put his name to an official Labour election statement reiterating the party's commitment to the ‘return’ of Jews to Palestine. Ultimately however, and with his view implacably set on the premise that a religion did not equate to a national identity, Attlee’s approach was motivated by political expediency that pivoted round the perennial concern for party unity. Although Labour’s official position on the 1939 White Paper was essentially to direct the subject and issues arising from Palestine before a Parliamentary Joint Select Committee before committing Parliament and Labour to a policy, and the re-emphasis on the efforts to secure a negotiated settlement via the Round Table Conference, Attlee’s concern was to keep a highly contentious, emotive and volatile issue from becoming a party issue with the potential for division and distractions.

³¹⁶ Crossman, Richard (1960: 65)

³¹⁷ Clement Attlee was mayor of metropolitan borough of Stepney (1919), becoming Labour MP for the East London constituency of Limehouse, Stepney in 1922.

Labour, World War Two, and the ideological response

As it was, the party was stricken by the crisis which World War Two represented to its foreign policy position. The optimism and belief in the commonality of working classes across nations was devastated by the evidence of popular support for Fascism in Europe, and by the tide of support for Hitler as German armies swept into Poland and Eastern Europe. The party had itself been bruised by Conservative taunts of a lack of patriotism in its ability to formulate a response other than appeasement at home (despite its enthusiasm for militant struggles elsewhere, including in Spain). Small states were clearly unable to defend themselves, and the League of Nations had entirely failed to do the job for them. In short, the world was less benign than had been assumed and the task of preserving order (including the values which the British held dear) had to be passed to an international authority with teeth, the decisions of which would be upheld by the Great Powers.

The utopianism of internationalism was thus abandoned, and Douglas has argued that the war therefore enabled the Labour Party to be fully reconciled with its own country and with nationalism in its patriotic, rather than jingoistic, form.³¹⁸ The threat of national extinction was sufficient to propel the party into an accommodation of socialism and British national interests without reservations, a position which would hold in the years following the war.

The War-Period Coalition

The Labour Party's participation in the coalition government (1940-1945) was its first role in government since 1931. During this period Jewish and Palestinian terrorist attacks upon the British forces and administration continued, leading Attlee to push Churchill to review British policy. As Attlee says:

³¹⁸ See: Douglas, Ray M. (2004) Chapter 5, *Utopia Deferred: The Attlee Administration and the United Nations, 1945-51*

'There is every probability of our being faced with violent action by either, or both, Jews and Arabs. We shall have a thankless task of keeping order and will be blamed by both sides.'³¹⁹

The War Cabinet agreed with Attlee that a Cabinet Committee be appointed to determine a strategy that could be formally adhered to. The Cabinet also sanctioned an extension to the period allowed for Jewish immigration, and also put forward Cyrenaica and/or Tripolitania (Libya) or Eritrea as alternatives for Jewish settlement.

In December 1943 the War Cabinet's Palestine Committee reported that it upheld the recommendation for Partition on the lines of the 1937 Peel Commission's Report (ownership of the Negev was to be decided), and again in October 1944 the Committee reported that it viewed that 'Partition should be carried out whatever the opposition from Palestine.'³²⁰ While the War Cabinet - which included Attlee - still favoured some form of partition as late as 1944, it had already been conceded that in light of Roosevelt's unequivocally pro-political Zionist addresses during his 1944 Democratic re-election campaign, that the United States would be taking a decisive diplomatic and active role. This almost certainly meant the restrictions on Jewish immigration and land purchase would be lifted. Britain (and Attlee) wanted the United States to assist and finance the situation in Palestine without incurring too much interference in the management of the Middle East and the Suez Canal.

Although the Labour Party was 'officially pro-Zionist'³²¹ and additional Cabinet and backbenchers were becoming more firmly supportive of Palestine as a Jewish state, Attlee retained his belief and position, arguing that conceding Palestine to the Zionists was not a viable basis for a policy. At worst, Attlee viewed the political Zionists in Palestine as 'reckless fanatics'³²² who would undermine wider British interests in the Middle Eastern region, and their ideology antagonized Attlee's detestation for all

³¹⁹ Burridge, Trevor (1985: 250) *Clement Attlee: A Political Biography*, quoting, Clement Attlee, Cabinet Memorandum, June 1943, (London: Cape)

³²⁰ Ibid., (1985: 253)

³²¹ Bethell, Nicholas (1979: 147) Chapter 5, *Partition and Terror*

³²² Ibid., (1985: 251)

forms of 'extreme nationalism.'³²³ Moreover, largely as a result of his experience of British Jewish communities he was not a 'great enthusiast for the idea that Palestine was the one place for the Jews.'³²⁴ It is also evident that Attlee came to absorb a fact that many generations of Labour and related figures failed to appreciate fully, the affinity the Palestinians had for Palestine. As Attlee says:

'... you might think that an Arab struggling to keep alive on a bare strip of sand would jump at the chance of going to Iraq or somewhere else where there was more opportunity for a better life. But oh no. One patch of desert doesn't look very different from another patch of desert but that was the one they wanted - their own traditional piece. They have this attachment to one place and nothing else will do.'³²⁵

Labour's 1944 Post-War Policy Statement

Irrespective of Attlee's pro-Jewish but anti-political Zionism position, it was nevertheless under his leadership and while Labour was a member of the WWII Coalition (1940-1945) that the party adopted its most pro-political Zionist policy against the background of the emerging horrors of the Holocaust. Although the 1944 policy initiative had hard-core party support it was led and championed by Hugh Dalton.

Dalton had by now become a senior Labour figure in his own right: between March and December 1944 Dalton drove the drafting of the Labour Party's International Post-War Policy Statement (1944) and the crafting of the campaign to secure its adoption as policy. Although the statement's primary focus was understandably consumed by issues in Europe, as Clement Attlee stated 'Europe came first,'³²⁶ the

³²³ Ibid., (1985: 249)

³²⁴ Ibid., (1985: 248) *quoting*, Clement Attlee (1967: 40), Interview, The Granada Historical Records

³²⁵ Williams, Francis (1961: 182) *A Prime Minister Remembers: The War and Post-War Memoirs of The Rt. Hon. Earl Attlee. Based on Private Papers and on a Series of Recorded Conversations*, Chapter 12, *Danger for the Middle East*, *quoting*, Clement Attlee

³²⁶ Ibid., (1961: 176)

document contained a small but significant reference to Palestine. Even before the statement was made known to the party, Dalton recalls in a sentence that clearly shows he understood the significance and thus likely reaction of the Foreign Office and the few Labour figures with knowledge and experience of the actual realities of Palestine and political Zionism, - the 'informed quarters:'

'I all but tell them [Noel-Baker and Chaim Weizmann] that I have drafted a very hot paragraph for the Labour Party on post-war Palestine.'³²⁷

Dalton's statement began by questioning the previous British policies, which had first allowed, then prevented Jewish immigration to Palestine as the government responded to sporadic violent events in Palestine and the responses of the various channels of pro-Arab and pro-political Zionist groups:

'Here,' we declared, 'we have halted half-way, irresolute between conflicting policies. But there is surely neither hope nor meaning in a 'Jewish National Home' unless we are prepared to let Jews, if they wish, enter this tiny land in such numbers as to become a majority.'

There was a strong case for this before the war. There is an irresistible case now, after the unspeakable atrocities of the cold and calculated German Nazi plan to kill all Jews in Europe.'³²⁸

The overt proposal to allow the Jews to become a majority in Palestine, with all accompanying implications, was radical enough in itself. But it was the following section of the statement that contained the most significant aspects of Labour's Policy, as Dalton continues:

'Here, too, in Palestine surely is a case, on human grounds and to promote a stable settlement, for transfer of population. Let the Arabs [Palestinians] be

³²⁷ Pimlott, Ben [Editor] (1986 [b]: 720) *The Second World War Diary of Hugh Dalton 1940-45, quoting*, Hugh Dalton, Wednesday, March 8, 1944, (London: Cape)

³²⁸ Dalton, Hugh (1957: 425-426)

encouraged to move out as the Jews move in. Let them be compensated handsomely for their land and let their settlement elsewhere be carefully organised and generously financed.'³²⁹

The proposal to transfer the Palestinians amounts to advocating ethnic cleansing.³³⁰ Dalton reconciled this proposal - and presumably in an effort to allay his own dilemma of conscience - on the misguided assertion that:

'The Arabs have very wide territories of their own; they must not claim to exclude the Jews from this small part of Palestine, less than the size of Wales. Indeed, we should examine also the possibility of extending the boundaries by agreement with Egypt, Syria and Transjordan.'³³¹

In the contextual magnitude of a ruined Europe, Dalton claims the section on Palestine cause barely a ripple within Labour or conference. But the Conservative, Oliver Stanley, said, this was 'Zionism plus plus.'³³² For Dalton what mattered was that what he called a 'strongly pro-Zionist' statement became policy. In the numbing climate of the Holocaust however, Dalton states he had little trouble securing the approval of the NEC or the Cabinet: 'I put this in my draft and persuaded my colleagues to accept it - Laski expressed most emotional gratitude.'³³³

³²⁹ Ibid., (1957: 426)

³³⁰ In the context of 1944 the proposal to transfer the Palestinians was not a unique or isolated practice and policy: significant Kurdish (1915), Turkish and Greek populations had experienced similar fates; and the partition of the Indian sub-continent into Pakistan and India in 1947 was to follow with the transfer of millions.

³³¹ Childs, David (1992: 48) [Third Edition] *Britain Since 1945: A Political History*, Chapter 3, *Colonial Retreat and Cold War, War in Palestine*, quoting, Hugh Dalton, (1957: 425-426) *The Fateful Years: Memoirs 1931-1945*, (London: Frederick Muller), (London: Routledge)

³³² Pimlott, Ben (1985: 390) Chapter XXIII, *Planning for Post-War*, quoting, Hugh Dalton Dairies, April 28, 1944

³³³ Dalton notes the extent of Harold Laski's gratitude: 'Indeed, Laski had embarrassed and surprised me at the first meeting by saying how wonderful he thought it all was, and nearly weeping over my Palestine Paragraph, on which he afterwards wrote me a most emotional

Apart from Hugh Dalton, it was the response of the Labour related figure of Harold Joseph Laski that is perhaps one of the most significant. Laski had by now fully converted to political Zionism despite having initially rejecting the philosophy in 1911. As his biographer Granville Eastwood notes:

‘Laski was not actively involved in the Zionist movement during the critical days of struggle between it and the British government. For many years he had kept his distance, partly due to [socialist] ideological reservations [about Jewish nationalism]. . . It was only after the terrible news reached England that the Nazis had really murdered six million Jews was there a change in Laski’s attitude to the movement of Jewish national liberation.’³³⁴

Harold Laski was a member of the National Executive Committee (NEC) from 1936, and served as chair of the party from 1945 to 1946. He also succeeded Dalton as the chair of the NEC International Sub-Committee.³³⁵ As an intellectual colossus and

and effusive letter.’ Pimlott, Ben [Editor] (1986 [b]: 732) *quoting*, Hugh Dalton, Wednesday, April 5, 1944

Dalton notes the reaction of the Conservative Oliver Stanley was less favorable: ‘Oliver Stanley comes to see me to say how very disturbing is our Palestine paragraph in I.P.W.S. [International Post-War Settlement]. It is tacked on, he feels, rather un-naturally, to a long and helpful statement on Europe. It will not, he hopes, be much played up in our propaganda. I say that I don’t think it will. But I remind him that the Labour Party has always taken a pro-Jewish line in parliamentary debates for many years. He is afraid that it may do harm in Palestine, both by encouraging the Jews to believe that the next British government, which they think may well be a Labour government, will do everything for them, and equally by unsettling the Arabs.’ Pimlott, Ben [Editor] (1986 [b]: 739), *quoting*, Hugh Dalton, Wednesday, April 26, 1944

³³⁴ Eastwood, Granville (1977: 95) *quoting*, Yaakov Morris

³³⁵ On succeeding Hugh Dalton as chair of the International Sub-Committee of the Party’s National Executive, Henry Pelling says: ‘One of his first tasks was to interview representatives of *Poale Zion*, the Jewish Socialist Organisation, which was far from happy with British policy in Palestine. Laski largely shared their views and accompanied some of the leaders to a private meeting with [Clement] Attlee, [Ernest Bevin] and George Hall, the

prodigious writer, there are few figures to rival Laski within the Labour Party in terms of his contribution to socialist theory and its practical application via policy.

Dalton's biographer Pimlott notes that six months after its publication, and while the section on Europe divided personalities in the party into bitter acrimony, the section of the statement on Palestine had an easy passage into Labour Policy:

'At the December 1944 Party Conference, this extraordinary declaration aroused no interest. Nobody raised Palestine, or the possible difficulties that disposing of 'this small area' . . . might involve. In the end the whole document was accepted by Conference without a vote.'³³⁶

In conclusion, the Post-War Statement and its adoption as policy were arguably as significant as any other statement on Palestine by a British political party; and certainly as a statement of policy by Labour. By late 1944 and early 1945 - and in the wake of the Holocaust - the pro-Palestinian safeguards had been abandoned by Labour to the extent that as Pimlott says:

'It had become a kind of unofficial Balfour Declaration.'³³⁷

Conclusion

The evidence presented in this chapter points to an extraordinarily protracted and complicated range of factors, issues and events which contributed to the development of an *essential dilemma* for Labour Party members in their efforts to construct policies towards political Zionism and Palestine during the period from 1900 to 1944.

Colonial Secretary, at which little satisfaction was obtained as to a redirection of policy.' Pelling, Henry (1984: 47-48) *The Labour governments 1945-51*, (London: Macmillan) Laski held the chair until June 1946 when it passed to the more moderate figure of Philip Noel-Baker.

³³⁶ Pimlott, Ben (1985: 390) *quoting*, Labour Parliamentary Archive Centre Records (LPACR), 1944, pp. 4-9, 140

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, (1985: 498)

The *basis* and *nature* of relations between Labour and political Zionism movement has been shown to derive from the perceived *common origins*, *related religious philosophies* (the psychological aspect and component of the *essential dilemma*) and *shared socialist ideology* (the ideological and political aspect and component of the *essential dilemma*) of their members.

The *common origins* aspect emerged from the similar social, economic and political circumstances that gave rise to the founding of the Labour Party in 1900 and the political Zionist Organisation in 1897; the exclusion of the working-class from the franchise were little different from the exclusions of Jews from aspects of society elsewhere, and the urban and rural deprivations of the classic slums, the Pales and ghettos were one and the same. The *related religious philosophies* aspect refers to the perception among many Labour figures that, in their Christian faith, they shared a common religious background, faith, education and principles with the Jewish 'Old Testament' peoples. Together these two aspects merged to create a psychological dimension to the responses of Labour Party figures to political Zionism and events in Palestine.

The *shared socialist ideology* is an equally ambiguous factor. In the early stages, when Labour figures were largely ignorant of the place and peoples of Palestine, and orientalist in their assumptions, it seemed to them that the progressive, socialist elements in the Zionist movement were their natural class allies and their socialist ideological brethren. It was this component of the early support within the party for a pro-political Zionist position that was increasingly tested by the realities of British imperial policy and political Zionist colonisation of Palestine.

The 'socialist' Branch of the political Zionist movement - notably *Poale Zion* - worked hard to sustain the conviction of Labour figures and the Labour Party in favour of the political Zionist agenda. This identification of Labour as a socialist party with that of the socialist Labor Zionism misled Labour figures into supporting political Zionism as a concept and movement as a whole, even though the 'socialist' credentials of Labor Zionism were questionable, its objectives and methods evidently at variants with socialist doctrine. The pro-political Zionist consensus within the party was increasingly challenged during even this early period by the emerging realities on

the ground in Palestine. The violent disturbances in Palestine in 1920, 1921 and 1929 challenged a number of core understandings and factors underpinning the *basis* and *nature* of relations between Labour and political Zionism, most crucially that Palestine was '*an empty land for a people [the Jews] without land.*' The subsequent series of government enquiries and their reports led to a growing awareness among Labour figures that the vast majority of Palestine's people were specifically Palestinian (as opposed to generically and more conveniently Arab), and that they too had an attachment and claim to Palestine. These disclosures led some Labour figures to review their political Zionism, and others to state that attempting to create a Jewish State in Palestine in the face of these realities amounted to colonialism, and could in light of the Palestinian resistance, only be achieved by exclusion, dispossession and force. If that was the case, then political Zionism was not a socialist movement and the venture in Palestine was not being conducted by socialists. In this sense, Labour figures were presented with an ideological conundrum, adding new dimensions to the *essential dilemma*.

The Labour Party had to develop its policy in practice, not in abstract, to respond to the evolving external context. In particular, the chapter showed that World War I, the League of Nations Mandate for Palestine, the often violent resistance of the indigenous Palestinian Arab population to political Zionist colonisation, the rise of Fascism and Nazism in Europe and the Holocaust of World War II, all acted to force the Labour Party to develop its policies towards political Zionism and Palestine itself. These *external determinants* of Labour policy were matched by *internal determinants*. The perceived *common origins*, *related religious philosophies* and *shared socialist ideologies* initially combined to act upon individuals within the Labour Party and create an essentially pro-political Zionist consensus within the party, and more particularly, within the Labour Party leadership. The leadership was also aware of the electoral importance of British Jewish communities and the need to be responsive to the appeals of Jewish Zionist organisations like *Poale Zion* and the Zionist Organisation. The Palestinian Arabs, in contrast, had no lobby voice within the party. Where Labour Party policy deviated from its political Zionism, it did so as a result of the exigencies of government, as opposed to the relative freedom of opposition benches. Thus we can argue that a further dimension to the *essential dilemma* lies in

its political component, the need to define policy with due regard for domestic and international political exigency at any given point in time.

The impact of this *essential dilemma* was to become more significant with time. With Labour's meteoric rise from the party's founding in 1900 to its forming of governments in 1924, 1929-1931 and participation in the 1940-1945 coalition, came the necessity to equate traditional pro-political Zionist sympathies within the party, with British national interests that were at times better served by policies with which the Arab populations of the Middle East could be at least sympathetic. In opposition the influence of the *essential dilemma* - that inability to reconcile the historic sympathies with political Zionism with the denial of an indigenous population's rights to self-determination - was limited to being an almost entirely internal party affair between Labour figures and over the policy position of the party; in government the consequences of the *essential dilemma* were exacerbated by the added complexities deriving from the duty of a government to maintain and advance British national and strategic interest. The contradictions could perhaps best be seen through the actions of leading party figures like Ramsay MacDonald who were caught in the web of government national responsibilities, on the one hand, and the confines of an assumed common socialist and biblical alignment with political Zionism, on the other. The consequence was the shenanigans, dithering and blunders that surrounded the 1930 White Paper and the Whitechapel debacle as Labour at first resolved to promote the primacy of British interests (as prescribed by the views of the Colonial Office), only to reverse the decision in the face of a protest from the pro-political Zionist Labour and related figures.

In the closing years of WWII, Labour's struggle with the *essential dilemma* appears to have climaxed into a stunning capitulation to its political Zionist component, going so far as to advocate the transfer of the Palestinians from Palestine to neighbouring territories in order to accommodate the mass immigration of Jewish survivors of the Holocaust from Europe. This dramatic shift was more a result of the dedicated activities within the party of a few key pro-political Zionist Labour and related figures, notably Dalton and Laski, playing heavily on the natural post-Holocaust sympathy with the plight of the Jews, than it was to any considered effort to address

the *essential dilemma*. The latter remained, temporarily obscured by the chaos of the post-war world, but nonetheless still in evidence, and still largely unresolved.

Throughout the period, the Labour response to political Zionism was formulated within the context of an evolving approach towards foreign policy as a whole, underpinned by debates within the party about the relationship between socialism, nationalism, and national rights to self-determination. Early disinterest and ignorance of foreign affairs, combined with paternalistic and orientalist world views, allowed the progressive attributes of political Zionism, as portrayed by socialist Zionists, to be foremost in the minds of Labour figures. However, as a more robust political intellectual response was required to the threats posed by militarism and colonialism to the internationalist order to which Labour had signed up during the inter-war period, and as the evidence of a Palestinian national desire for self-determination became more visible, so the dilemmas presented by Labour support for political Zionism became more evident. Unable to reconcile the intellectual gaps, and faced by rising violence in Palestine from all sides, it was inevitable that Labour would ultimately hand the problem to the international authority of the United Nations.

Chapter 2

Modern Era: 1945-1993

The Evolution of the *Essential Dilemma* (1945-1962)

Introduction

This chapter illustrates the ongoing impact of the *essential dilemma* and Labour's failure and/or unwillingness to reconcile the irreconcilable and address the double promise made to Arabs and political Zionists in relation to Palestine. It identifies and examines the *internal* and *external determinates* which influenced the *basis* and *nature* of relations between the Labour Party, political Zionism in Britain, and the new state of Israeli in the period from 1945 to 1962. It demonstrates that, despite the growing evidence of the *essential dilemma* which this relationship generated, and in spite of apparent policy alterations, in fact a fundamentally pro-political Zionist policy trajectory was maintained by Labour, due not least to the preferences and positions of prominent leadership and other Labour figures. However, the chapter also demonstrates that during this period, the salience of the various components of the *essential dilemma*, the psychological, ideological and political, altered from the previous era. Whilst previously the psychological dimension had been the pre-eminent problematic for the party in so far as there existed a generalised sympathy with political Zionism based on the perceived *common origins* and *related religious philosophies*, in this era the momentous events in Europe, and the requirement that Labour's first majority national government respond to them effectively in the national interest, meant that the ideological and political dimensions of the *essential dilemma* became more pre-eminent. The psychological dimension retained a significant role, not least in the sympathy generated for the victims of Nazi persecution, but events and Labour policy were sufficiently 'unhelpful' to the political Zionist cause as to generate the evolution of a more concentrated group of committed lobbyists within the party for political Zionism and latterly for the State of Israel.

The Labour Party's First Majority Government (1945-1951)³³⁸

Undoubtedly, a key *internal determinant* of Labour's relationship with political Zionism, as with everything else, was its election to power as a majority governing party in 1945.

Domestically the good news was that Labour had secured an electoral victory with a huge landslide majority. Beyond that the picture looked decidedly grim: the country was in grave financial jeopardy of bankruptcy with a chronic balance of payments deficit at a time when reconstruction needs were at a height. The war against Japan continued and the socialist Labour government presided over austere economic and social conditions, epitomised by a harsh rationing regime. Abroad, the British overseas possessions in 1945 still encompassed a vast territory at a time when the necessary finances and manpower presented a stark contradiction to the availability of finance and the unwillingness of service personnel to remain in active service. Added to this was the clamour of nations within many of those territories to attain self-determination, not least the Indian Sub-Continent (which quickly developed into open struggles for independence via another painful process of national partition), additionally Malaya, Egypt, Persia, Kenya and Aden all vied to shake off British colonial rule. All this culminated in a typically British crescendo in the shape of the weather, which conspired to produce two of the severest successive winters of the century, depleting already depleted coal stocks precipitating a national energy crisis as train lines froze and live stock perished in the fields.

Not surprisingly, amid these pressingly desperate circumstances and an empire that still encompassed a fifth of the globe and its peoples, Palestine did not initially feature too prominently on Labour's immediate list of concerns, a situation that would change all too quickly, particularly with the on-set of the Cold War.

The election of the Labour Party with a landslide majority had been celebrated among Labour's pro-political Zionist figures and the wider Zionist movement generally. As Kingsley Martin says:

³³⁸ Between 1945 and 1951 Labour formed two majority governments; the first 1945-1950, the second with a majority of five February 23, 1950 - October 25, 1951.

‘If Labour’s victory in 1945 seemed to British Socialists a sight of the Promised Land, to Jews everywhere the words could be used in a direct and non-symbolic sense. For the Jewish people the return to Palestine was the eternal dream; Zionists had two generations of strenuous work behind them, and since 1918 they had relied on the Labour Party’s specific pledge to give reality to the Mandate’s obligation to establish a Jewish National Home in Palestine.’³³⁹

The Labour Party in 1945 was identified as being ‘overwhelmingly pro-Zionist.’³⁴⁰ The expectation that Labour would swiftly reverse the 1939 White Paper and its severe restrictions on Jewish immigration to Palestine was particularly understandable given Labour’s 1944 Post-War Policy Statement committing the party to facilitating a Jewish State in the whole of mandate Palestine. However, as historian Ben Pimlott says:

‘When in July the unexpected happened and a Labour government was elected, there was dancing in the streets of Tel-Aviv. The euphoria was short-lived. Within a few days of taking office, Labour had abandoned its commitment.’³⁴¹

The sense of high expectation at Labour’s election to government was based on the political Zionist’s knowledge that they had the support of Labour figures at the highest levels of the Labour Party. However, once in government, the Labour Party elite seemed more inclined to pragmatism than idealism, this is particularly true of Ernest Bevin, - the new Foreign Secretary.

As a coalition or opposition party, Labour could be more idealistic with its policies towards political Zionism; as a party in government the wider responsibilities and

³³⁹ Martin, Kingsley (1953: 206) *Harold Laski 1883-1950: A Biographical Memoir*, Chapter X, *The Jewish Question*, (London: Victor Gollancz)

³⁴⁰ Healey, Denis (1990: 89-90) *The Time of My Life*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin)

³⁴¹ Pimlott, Ben (1985: 391)

duties to national and strategic, rather than the party's perceived interests, imposed enormous demands upon leadership individuals. Sections of the party implored them to apply the policies on Palestine adopted in 1944. In the context of the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust and the continuing plight of survivors languishing in European detention camps, the decision by Clement Attlee, Ernest Bevin (Foreign Secretary) and Cabinet to abandon the 1944 policy seemed particularly harsh. Winston Churchill's opinion that the 'Labour Party had lost its zeal for Zionism'³⁴² is further elaborated by academic historian, Martin Gilbert:

'On taking charge of British foreign policy on 27th July 1945, Bevin set himself against allowing into Palestine the 100,000 survivors of the Holocaust . . . He also set himself against Churchill's assurances to the Peel Commission eight years earlier that the British contemplated, in due course, a Jewish majority and a Jewish State in Palestine. These were severe blows to the half million Jews of Palestine, and those Jews waiting in DP [Displaced Persons] camps in Europe to be given refuge there.'³⁴³

For Bullock, the reasons for Bevin's position were explained thus:

'The key to the change which took place in Bevin's - and the Labour Government's - attitude is to be found, I believe, in two things: the direct responsibility which he and other Labour ministers had for the first time to take for British policy in Palestine and the Middle East, and the much greater difficulties which Palestine presented in 1945 than it had for any of Bevin's predecessors.'³⁴⁴

³⁴² Gilbert, Martin (2007: 249) Chapter 22, *'I shall Continue to Do My Best'*

³⁴³ Ibid., (2007: 249-250)

³⁴⁴ Bullock, Alan (1983: 166) *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary 1945-1951*, Chapter 4, *First Encounters*, (London: Heinemann)

The historian David Child's claims that once Attlee and Bevin were in office it seems the historically close and friendly ties between the Labour Party and British political Zionists ceased to be a decisive consideration,³⁴⁵ with the consequence that:

‘Of all the controversies over external affairs Palestine was the one that caused the Attlee government the most bitter recriminations with its own supporters. It is the issue most frequently mentioned by Labour survivors of the period as having been mismanaged by their government.’³⁴⁶

But while the Labour Leader and the Cabinet as a whole were prepared to affirm British interests over those of the party on the Palestine-political Zionism question, the majority of the party residing upon the backbenches evidently was not. In many ways it was the extremes represented by Labour's policy positions in 1944 and the adoption of the 1939 White Paper position in 1945 which caused most exasperation among pro-political Zionist figures. Not surprisingly Hugh Dalton was one of the most vociferous of these disgruntled figures. As the first post-1945 Chancellor of the Exchequer, Dalton claimed he ‘continued to feel a sense of personal responsibility towards the worst victims of Nazi atrocities.’³⁴⁷ As he says: ‘On August 1st I wrote: ‘In the twelve months since our election victory [July 1945] events in Palestine have not gone well.’³⁴⁸

For pro-political Zionist Labour figures like Hugh Dalton, Ian Mikardo, Herbert Morrison, Harold Laski and Richard Crossman, the villain behind this Labour abandonment of political Zionism was the foreign minister, Ernest Bevin. Their combined angst was to culminate in the backbench revolt of January 1949.

³⁴⁵ Childs, David (1992: 46)

³⁴⁶ Ibid., (1992: 46)

³⁴⁷ Pimlott, Ben (1985: 498)

³⁴⁸ Dalton, Hugh (1962: 145) *High Tide and After: Memoirs 1945-1960*, Chapter XVI, *Palestine*, (London: Frederick Muller)

Ernest Bevin: A Controversial Foreign Minister

As the illegitimate son of a district rural nurse, and orphaned aged 8, Bevin had left school at 11 to rise from a poverty-stricken background and a rudimentary secondary education, through the bear-pit of the trade union movement to become Labour's first post-1945 Foreign Secretary.³⁴⁹ In terms of social mobility he was the embodiment of the party's origins and ethos. Despite his personal failings, within the party he was generally well respected, if not revered.³⁵⁰ And as Bevin's definitive biographer - Allan Bullock - says: 'No voices were raised in question when . . . his ashes was placed in Westminster Abbey,' in what Attlee called this 'ancient shrine of our nation.'³⁵¹

As Foreign Secretary, Bevin attempted to apply a maxim that had stood him in good stead for his entire political career: that in all disputes there has to be compromise, and that all parties have an ultimate interest in avoiding and/or resolving conflict. Within the sphere of industrial relations that may be an acceptable measure. What many have since argued is that Bevin's fatal error was to apply this compromising

³⁴⁹ Bullock says of Bevin's appointment: 'less than twenty-four hours before . . . Bevin had believed he was going to the Treasury, and the Foreign Office had expected that Dalton would succeed [Anthony] Eden as Foreign Secretary. It was only the previous afternoon that Attlee finally decided to switch them.' Bullock, Alan (1983: 3) Chapter 1, *The World in the Summer of 1945*. Attlee's decision - in part at least - is attributed to H.R.H. King George VI: 'I asked him whom he would make Foreign Secretary and he suggested Dr Hugh Dalton. I disagreed with him and said that Foreign Affairs was the most important subject at the moment and I hoped he would make Mr Bevin take it.' Chaitani, Youssef (2002: 16) *Dissension Among Allies: Ernest Bevin's Palestine Policy between Whitehall and the White House, 1945-47*, Chapter 1, *Ernest Bevin: The Man, his Middle East Vision and Palestine*, quoting, King George VI diaries, in Sir John Wheeler-Bennett's, *The Life of King George VI*, Harold Wilson (1981) *The Chariot of Israel*, p.125, (London: Saqi Books)

³⁵⁰ Ernest Bevin's Permanent Private Secretary at the Foreign Office, Sir Roderick Barclay, said of "Ernie Bevin" that he was 'by a long way the most remarkable of my various chiefs.' Barclay, Roderick (1975: xi) *Ernest Bevin and the Foreign Office 1932-1969*, (London: Latimer)

³⁵¹ Bullock, Alan (1983: 835). Bevin also received honorary degrees from Oxford and Cambridge Universities.

formula to the Palestine-political Zionism equation, a situation not 'open to compromise'³⁵² by either side. However, as with previous and subsequent Labour Foreign Secretaries, Bevin was relatively inexperienced for the post of Foreign Minister, and particularly for this dispute.³⁵³ Bullock states:

'The truth is that until he became Foreign Secretary himself Bevin had never taken an interest in Palestine or the Middle East.'³⁵⁴

As such, he proved open to the change that his subsequent policies were predicated on his own supposed anti-Semitic leanings.

Ian Mikardo, an active pro-political Zionist and experienced Labour MP stated unequivocally:

'My own single attempt to have a talk with Bevin was a disaster, and I came away from it with the discovery that he was not only anti-Zionist but also anti-Jewish.'³⁵⁵

Mikardo claims that the origins of Bevin's anti-political Zionism arose from the Whitechapel³⁵⁶ experience, and that this had developed into a 'fanatical hatred' for the Zionist Jews in Palestine, manifesting into an 'obsession which finally led him into the humiliation of having to give up the Palestine mandate because his operation of it had become a miserable, abject, irredeemable failure.'³⁵⁷ Adding that Bevin's position

³⁵² Weiler, Peter (1993: 170) *Ernest Bevin*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press)

³⁵³ On becoming Foreign Secretary, Bullock states Bevin could not 'conceal his disappointment' at not being Chancellor. Bullock, Alan (1967: 394) *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin: Volume 2, Minister of Labour 1940-1945*, Chapter 12, *The 1945 Election*, (London: Heinemann)

³⁵⁴ Bullock, Alan (1983: 166)

³⁵⁵ Ian Mikardo (1988: 97) *Back-Bencher*, Chapter 7, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson)

³⁵⁶ Whitechapel and St George By-Election (1930) See: Chapter 1.

³⁵⁷ Mikardo, Ian (1988: 98)

also emulated from an intense dislike for anyone who 'defied him so openly and so successfully.'³⁵⁸

Mikardo believes anti-Semitism also extended to the Labour Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, with subsequent negative consequences for a number of key careers, including Mikardo's own.³⁵⁹ Mikardo cites as evidence the account of an Inner-Cabinet meeting conveyed to him at which a suggestion that Ian Mikardo and Austen Albu be given Ministerial posts was rejected by Attlee 'apparently on racial grounds as 'they both belonged to the Chosen People, and he didn't think he wanted any more of *them*.'³⁶⁰ While noting that Mikardo is uncertain of the origins of this 'antisemitism of Attlee's',³⁶¹ he suggests:

'It may have derived from his contacts with Jews during the many years he spent in the East End; it may have been a fallout from his long-running bad-tempered disagreements with Harold Laski, who would be in Attlee's bad books not merely as a Jew but also as an intellectual and doctrinal socialist; and it may have been a transference from Ernest Bevin, by whom he was always greatly influenced and who as Foreign Secretary developed a bitter hatred of the Jews because a few thousand of them successfully defied him, by running the gauntlet of his warships, to get out of concentration camps in Germany and join their own, and welcoming, people in Palestine, and because in the end he had to admit defeat at the hands of the Palestinian Jews and leave others to solve a problem which he couldn't solve because he never understood it.'³⁶²

In contrast to the claims by figures like Mikardo that Bevin was anti-Jewish and anti-political Zionist, the equally staunchly political Zionist Herbert Morrison (later Foreign Secretary) said:

³⁵⁸ Ibid., (1988: 98)

³⁵⁹ Ibid., (1988: 4) *Preface*

³⁶⁰ Ibid., (1988: 4) *quoting*, Ben Pimlott (1985), *Hugh Dalton*, (London: Jonathan Cape)

³⁶¹ Ibid., (1988: 4)

³⁶² Ibid., (1988: 4)

‘When he was thwarted he could say things and take steps which in retrospect he probably regretted. The time when the Stern and other terrorist gangs began causing trouble in Palestine was a case in point. Before that he was wholeheartedly in favour of co-operating with Jews to help them build up their national home.’³⁶³

Morrison continues:

‘He was excessively annoyed when events showed that big sections of the Jewish population did not appreciate his idea of how they should achieve national independence. Only then could it be said that Bevin became anti-Jewish. He was never anti-Semitic in the sense of having racial hatred.’³⁶⁴

Clement Attlee and Ernest Bevin undoubtedly came under sustained pressure from pro-political Zionist elements within the party in the period 1945-1949. In addition to Hugh Dalton and Harold Laski, one of the most notable pro-political Zionist Labour MPs was Sydney Silverman. As the Foreign Office Under-Secretary of State (1946-1950), Christopher Mayhew³⁶⁵ says that in the post-1945 period the greatest source of pressure for a policy change on Jewish immigration to Palestine came from this ‘left-wing’ Labour MP:

³⁶³ Morrison, Herbert (1960: 272-273) *Herbert Morrison: An Autobiography by Lord Morrison of Lambeth*, Chapter 20, *I Become Foreign Secretary*, (London: Odhams)

³⁶⁴ Ibid., (1960: 272-273)

³⁶⁵ Christopher Mayhew (b.1915-d.1997) MP: (Norfolk South, 1945-1950), (Woolwich East, 1951-1974). Mayhew says his ‘conversion to Socialism owed little or nothing to my religious upbringing, or compassion for working-class people. Nor was it due to intellectual conviction’, but like ‘many middle-class Socialists, as a reaction to the ‘tyranny of my public school.’ Mayhew, Christopher (1969: 14) *Forward, Party Games*, (London: Hutchinson)

‘The deputations were almost always well-informed, articulate, demanding, passionate and ruthless. The most formidable of their spokesmen, without question, was Sydney Silverman.’³⁶⁶

Of Jewish origins and parentage, Silverman’s relationship to Judaism is described by his biographer, Emrys Hughes:

‘Although he was not religious-minded and did not worship, he combined a profound and sincere respect for the Jewish faith with a strong feeling for Jewish history and tradition.’³⁶⁷

Another of Silverman’s biographers, A. L. Easterman, describes the combined influence of his socialism and religious philosophy as follows,

‘My Socialist friends who will applaud my efforts for Socialism must agree it means nothing if it does not mean the relief of the persecuted and the oppressed, and the fact that I too am a Jew does not, I hope, disqualify my efforts when the Jews are the immediate victims.’³⁶⁸

Easterman said in a eulogy to Silverman in 1969 that the experience and plight of Jews in Europe and Russia that resulted in Silverman’s family flight from Romania and his own early conversion to political Zionism as a result:

‘In his early youth, he joined the Zionist Movement in Liverpool. This was the era when millions of Jews in Russia, the largest Jewish Community in the world, were under the thrall of Tsarist anti-Semitic terrorism, confined by laws to Pales of Settlement, denied civil rights, subject incessantly to the antipathies of State and Church, and to physical attack, pillage and murder. . . .

³⁶⁶ Mayhew, Christopher (1987: 116) *Time to Explain: An Autobiography*, Chapter 9, *Bevin and Palestine*, (London: Hutchinson)

³⁶⁷ Hughes, Emrys (1969: 216) *Sydney Silverman: Rebel in Parliament*, quoting, A. L. Easterman, *Sydney Silverman: A Jewish Estimate*, (London: Charles Skilton)

³⁶⁸ Ibid., (1969: 82) Chapter Nine, *Plea for the Jews*, quoting, Sydney Silverman

As a Jew, Sydney was revolted by savage onslaughts on his fellow Jews for no reason other than blind hatred of their race or religion. As a socialist, he was infuriated and repelled by the inhumanity and injustice inflicted on his people . . . He saw the Zionist movement for a Jewish National Home in Palestine as the one radical, practical solution of 'the Jewish problem.'³⁶⁹

Furthermore, the horrors of the Nazi genocide and the plight of Jewish survivors crystalised Silverman's pro-political Zionist position within the Labour Party. In April 1945 as part of an All-Party Parliamentary Delegation, he travelled to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. The experience, says Hughes, left him 'sickened and horrified; the memory of it remained with him all his life.'³⁷⁰

Sydney Silverman's fervent commitment elevated him into one of the most active and vocal pro-political Zionist Labour figures. His criticisms of Labour policy and Bevin - of whom he said 'called himself a Socialist'³⁷¹ - became increasingly strident. As a consequence, and as with other Labour figures, it has been suggested that Silverman's political Zionism ultimately denied him a Ministerial position in the 1945-1951 Cabinet:

'It is true that he acquired a reputation in Parliament of being awkward and difficult, too assertive and opinionative, but of his ability there was no doubt and those who knew him best thought it was a mistake on [Clement] Attlee's part to leave him out. . . . Bevin was not enthusiastic about Jews and Sydney had an idea that his activities on the Jewish problems were against him, and said so freely to his Jewish friends.'³⁷²

³⁶⁹ Ibid., (1969: 216-217) *quoting*, A L. Easterman, *Sydney Silverman: A Jewish Estimate*.

³⁷⁰ Ibid., (1969: 84)

³⁷¹ Ibid., (1969: 85) *quoting*, Sydney Silverman

³⁷² Ibid., (1969: 90) Chapter 10, *1945 Labour Government*. Hughes says: 'Another story is that his name was included in a list of possible ministers but that Herbert Morrison had objected. Would Sydney Silverman have made a good Cabinet Minister? The trouble with Sydney was that he was honest, out-spokenly, aggressively, uncompromisingly, intellectually

This accusation is found elsewhere in the politics of the moment. It is frequently cited, particularly among political Zionist figures, that - apart from his supposed anti-Semitism - one of key reasons for the extent of Labour disquiet over Palestine was that Bevin was 'tragically miscast as Labour's Foreign Secretary'³⁷³ and that the post should really have gone to Hugh Dalton. As the historian Archie Potts conveys:

'Hugh Dalton would have been far better, first of all because he really did know a lot about foreign affairs; secondly because he knew how to manage the Foreign Office officials, instead of being run by them; thirdly, because he was capable of learning from experience and correcting his mistakes; fourthly because he would listen to the views of backbench colleagues instead of treating any criticism or comments as an insult and relying on blind trade union loyalties and the power of the block vote to impose on the Labour Party the Churchillian policies that the Foreign Office had induced him to adopt.'³⁷⁴

The influence of the Foreign Office on Bevin came under scrutiny in arguments that it was viewed by leading Labour figures, and Dalton himself, that he had been overlooked by Attlee for the post of Foreign Secretary. Dalton and others claimed this was as a result of his pro-political Zionist sympathies and actions.

'Bevin came to foreign affairs without knowledge, and hence without preconceptions. Dalton by contrast was regarded as 'viewy' because of his pro-Zionist stance on Palestine, . . . It was feared that, on such matters, he might be reluctant to take advice.' The trade union leader's [Bevin] later reputation among diplomats as a great Foreign Secretary owed much to his readiness to

honest, which might have proved awkward for any government.' Hughes, Emrys (1969: 89-90) Chapter 10, *1945 Labour Government*

³⁷³ Saville, John (1993: 81) *The Politics of Continuity: British Foreign Policy and the Labour Government 1945-46*, Chapter 2, *Ernest Bevin as Foreign Secretary: Attitudes, Work Patterns, Health*, (London: Verso)

³⁷⁴ Potts, Archie (2002: 99) *Zilliacus: A Life for Peace and Socialism*, Chapter 15, *Into Parliament*, (London: Merlin)

be 'put on the right line'. . . . Attlee came to believe that Dalton's appointment to the Foreign Office would cause serious trouble within the service.'³⁷⁵ ³⁷⁶

Dalton himself attributed Bevin's Palestine policy to the anti-Semitism thesis:

'He [Bevin] suffered, however, from an inhibition due to his belief, which I heard him more than once express, that "Jews are a religion, not a race or a nation." And I heard [Clement] Attlee several times express the same opinion.'³⁷⁷

Similarly Harold Wilson agreed:

'It is not too strong a phrase to say that Ernie was anti-Semitic. In his policy for Palestine and the Middle East generally, he never accepted the conference commitments and election pledges of the Labour Party [1944 Post-War Statement]'.³⁷⁸

In sum, the academic historian Stephen Haseler claims that the 'Labour movement lived with Ernest Bevin in a state of confusion', and that what really wrangled the pro-political Zionists in particular was the fact that Bevin's anti-Zionist policies 'cut deeply across many traditional socialist attitudes to foreign affairs,'³⁷⁹ most particularly a historical sympathy and commitment by Labour to political Zionism.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., (1985: 413)

³⁷⁶ Ben Pimlott claims it was rumoured that Attlee had been warned by a Cabinet colleague - Bridges - 'not to appoint Dalton because several senior Foreign Office men would resign if he did so.' Pimlott, Ben (1985: 413)

³⁷⁷ Dalton, Hugh (1962: 147) Chapter XVI, *Palestine*

³⁷⁸ Wilson, Harold (1986: 125) *Memoirs: The Making of a Prime Minister 1916-64*, (London: Weidenfeld, Nicolson & Michael Joseph)

³⁷⁹ Haseler, Stephen (1969: 112) *The Gaitskellites: Revisionism in the British Labour Movement 1951-64*, Chapter 6, *The Spectre of Ernest Bevin*, (London: Macmillan)

The Labour Revolt against Attlee and Bevin begins.

Infuriated by what he saw as Labour's neglect of both the Jewish refugees and the commitments made in the 1944 statement, Dalton initially blamed the Foreign Office for unduly influencing Bevin³⁸⁰, an assessment largely agreed with by Pimlott:

'The new Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, was quickly won over by his officials, and the 1939 White Paper became the Palestine policy of the new government. Bevin had taken no part in the wartime discussions on Palestine. He was made rapidly aware of the strong resistance that would result in the Arab world, with Palestine and outside it, if Jewish immigration was not strictly controlled. In addition he had little sympathy for the aspirations of the Jews.'³⁸¹

It is also claimed that in part Bevin's policy resulted in particular from the undue influence of the renowned Arabist Sir Harold Beeley.³⁸² Beeley was appointed Secretary of the Anglo-American Commission of Inquiry on Palestine (1946), Ambassador to Saudi Arabia in 1955 and Assistant Under-Secretary in the Foreign Office 1956-58 and was chief advisor to Ernest Bevin on Palestine and Middle East. John Longrigg said this of him: 'Harold Beeley's reputation, and the high esteem in which his colleagues in Britain and abroad held him, rests mainly on his role as one of the most influential creators and practitioners of British policy in the Middle East during the thirty-odd years after the end of the Second World War. He recognised, perhaps earlier than others, that a romantic notion of desert hawks and black tents was an unreliable basis for policy.'³⁸³

He read our material and within a few weeks he came to the conclusion, I think purely on intellectual grounds, that the traditional Labour Party policy was wrong. It's not true that Bevin was "got a grip of" by the Foreign Office.

³⁸⁰ Dalton, Hugh (1962: 147) Chapter XVI, *Palestine*

³⁸¹ Pimlott, Ben (1985: 391)

³⁸² Sir Harold Beeley (b.1909-d.2001) British Ambassador to Cairo, Egypt (1961-1964)

³⁸³ John Longrigg, *The Independent*, Obituary, Sir Harold Beeley, (August 2, 2001)

<http://news.independent.co.uk/people/obituaries/article35469.ece>

But it was only by becoming a minister in charge of a department that he could become fully informed of the issues.’³⁸⁴

Hugh Dalton nonetheless developed a valuable ally in an unexpected quarter: Richard [Dick] Crossman, one of the foremost socialist intellectual left-wing figures of the post-1945 generation. Crossman was appointed by Ernest Bevin to the 1946 Anglo-American Commission, in part, because he had little or no previous knowledge or experience of the subject of Palestine and political Zionism, and as such, Bevin assumed he would conclude that the Palestine Policy based on British interests and close Arab ties would prevail. But for Crossman, his involvement in the 1946 enquiry, established to find a common Anglo-American position on the solution for Jewish displaced persons in Europe (and to stymie American-imposed increases in Jewish immigration into Palestine), catapulted him into the field with unexpected results. Crossman’s biographer - Anthony Howard - says ‘he seems to have fallen in love with the country straight way. His sympathies, though, were not engaged by one side alone ...’³⁸⁵ As Crossman himself explained:

‘I arrived in Jerusalem straight from Dachau, quite overwhelmed by the need of European Jewry to return home. After travelling across Germany and Austria in the winter of 1945, I did not need to be taught the Jewish case. I knew it by heart and from the heart.’³⁸⁶

Despite the undisputed impact of the Holocaust and the ongoing plight of survivors, the situation in Palestine also evidently made a deep impression upon Crossman as he realised on his arrival that the Palestinians were being overridden in order to facilitate a Jewish State via mass Jewish immigration:

³⁸⁴ Bethell, Nicholas (1979: 202) Chapter 7, *Churchill’s Legacy to Bevin*

³⁸⁵ Howard, Anthony (1991: 117-118) *Crossman: The Pursuit of Power*, Chapter 9, *Zionist Convert*, (London: Pimlico)

³⁸⁶ Crossman, Richard (1960: 54)

‘What stuck in my gullet was the idea that British troops should be used to hold the Arabs down while the Jews were given time to create an artificial Jewish majority.’³⁸⁷

It was the personality to assess the situation for himself, and Crossman’s impeccable socialist credentials that were also noted by the political Zionists. In a revealing quote, the contradictions posed by the realities of the political Zionist’s agenda to replace the Palestinians in Palestine and socialism are all too evident in a brief sent to Weizmann by an American Zionist in advance of Crossman’s arrival in Palestine:

‘There is no one on the British delegation that you have to fear except Dick Crossman. He’s the brainiest of the lot, the most sophisticated, the most intelligent - a real socialist and a leftist socialist at that. He is a man to be watched and feared.’³⁸⁸

However, Zionist concerns proved unfounded. Sympathy for the plight of Jewish victims of Nazism proved the stronger argument for Crossman than the dispossession of the Palestinians. Crossman embraced partition within days of his arrival. As Howard says, ‘In truth, there will always be a difficulty about following the exact details of Dick’s conversion to the Zionist cause.’³⁸⁹ But whatever the source of the ‘Damascus road’³⁹⁰ experience, he concludes, ‘Zionism was to remain one cause to which Dick remained constant throughout his life.’³⁹¹ The effect in terms of his ascendancy to the head of the pro-political Zionist lobby and his influence upon Labour figures was profound and protracted. As Howard further states:

‘Dick was driven to the conclusion that, if he was to bring about any change in the Foreign Office attitude, he would have to fight the government in order to

³⁸⁷ Crossman, Richard (1960: 54)

³⁸⁸ Howard, Anthony (1991: 119) *quoting*, Meyer Weisgal, briefing to Chaim Weizmann, quoted in *The Times*, April 24, 1974, titled, *A Frank and Loyal Friend of Israel*

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, (1991: 115)

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, (1991: 115)

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, (1991: 126)

get it. That summer he launched what was to develop into a three-year campaign (1946-1949) which eventually vindicated his own initial instincts in favour of partition as the only viable solution to the problems of Palestine.³⁹²

Crossman found little sympathy for his new found views with Attlee and Bevin, who had already decided not to act on the report. Additionally indeed, Hugh Gaitskell claims that Crossman fell from Bevin's favour because on his return from the Committee he 'quarrelled with the Foreign Office. He did not keep in touch with them. He developed views of his own, and started giving expression to them, without making sure they agreed with him.'³⁹³

Influences upon Labour Party Leadership and Policy

There can be little doubt that the Foreign Office did indeed influence Bevin's judgment. They knew well that if Britain were to retain its position as the 'paramount power in the Middle East' it would require the 'goodwill of the Arab states as hostile to Zionist claims as the Palestinian Arabs.'³⁹⁴ Alan Bullock quotes the findings of the Labour government's own commission on Palestine:

'The Middle East is a region of vital consequence for Britain and the British Empire. It is also the Empire's main reservoir of mineral oil. The attitude of the Arab states to any decision [regarding Palestine] is a matter of the first importance. Protection of our vital interests depends, therefore, on the collaboration from these independent states. Unfortunately the future of Palestine bulks large in Arab eyes . . . !'³⁹⁵

But whilst Labour Ministers struggled with the realities of national interest, the Holocaust had served to strengthen the empathy within the ranks of the party and the

³⁹² Ibid., (1991: 125)

³⁹³ Williams, Philip M. [Editor] (1983: 333) *The Diary of Hugh Gaitskell 1945-1956*, Chapter 6, *Opposition Front Bench*, [1952-4] [D. 1952-4 continued], (London: Jonathan Cape)

³⁹⁴ Bullock, Alan (1983: 169)

³⁹⁵ Report of the Palestine Committee, September 8, 1945, [CP (45) 156], and Bullock, Allan (1983: 170-171)

backbenches for the cause of political Zionism. As Mayhew and journalist Michael Adams noted:

‘On short-term human grounds, the case for unrestricted immigration [to Palestine] was overwhelmingly strong. Scores of thousands of desperate Jewish people, fleeing from the scene of their wartime nightmare in Europe, were being channelled by Zionist organisations towards Palestine. Most of them were destitute and many were physically or mentally crippled. How could any civilised government, let alone a British Labour government, fail to admit them? Never before or since have I known a more distressing task than that of defending the government’s immigration policy to outraged deputations of Zionists. These deputations were almost always well-informed, articulate, demanding, passionate and ruthless.’³⁹⁶

The *essential dilemma* which had increasingly troubled Labour figures in the 1917 to 1944 period as the awareness of the realities of political Zionism and Palestine became gradually more apparent, was checked among some Labour figures by the Holocaust and the plight of survivors. The immediacy and emotiveness of the collective European guilt over the victims of Nazi genocide seemed more urgent than the consequences for the Palestinians of a Jewish state in their lands, and more compelling than the Labour Government’s own practical assessments of British national interest. The ideological dimension of the *essential dilemma* could furthermore be placated through the party’s own analysis of post-war colonial policy.

The Labour Party had initiated a post-war colonial policy review in response to the changing international circumstances and the clamour for self-determination and independence that occurred after 1945. The Review became a mechanism whereby Labour’s socialist credentials could be aligned with the possession of overseas territories, and the efforts to retain them as Dominions via economic development and financial investment.

³⁹⁶ Adams, Michael & Mayhew, Christopher (2006: 22) *Publish It Not: The Middle East Cover-Up*, (Oxford: Signal)

One of the most prominent Labour policies during the post-1945 period was thus the economic development of the colonies to facilitate the conditions for greater autonomy (Dominion and Commonwealth status) and eventual independence: until 1948 this policy included Palestine. The leading exponent and architect of this policy was Rita Hinden.³⁹⁷ Hinden was the embodiment of a Labour related figure with impeccable socialist credentials. As Morgan says, 'She was a deeply moral person, and her vision of socialism was a reflection of this passionately ethical outlook.'³⁹⁸

'When she turned her pen to such themes as poverty in the third world...she wrote with heart and soul as well as with considerable intellectual power.'³⁹⁹

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Hinden was a relatively rare type among Labour figures: having personal experience of the religious, political and the cultural aspects of the Palestine-political Zionism conflict. Although her commitment to political Zionism waned and eventually ended, her essential position remained located in the belief that the Zionist enterprises in Palestine - as with the British ventures elsewhere in the Empire - were basically

³⁹⁷ [Rebecca] Rita Hinden (b.1909-d.1971)

³⁹⁸ Morgan, Kenneth O. (1987: 239) *Labour People. Leaders and Lieutenants: Hardie to Kinnock*, Chapter 3, *The Years of Power 1945-1970, Rita Hinden*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

³⁹⁹ Ibid., (1987: 239)

⁴⁰⁰ Morgan states: 'Rita Hinden's special vision of life derived in part from her ethnic background. She was a South African and a Jew. She was, therefore, directly implicated by birth in the two major human tragedies of the century. When she was eighteen the family, intensely orthodox in its Jewish faith and strongly Zionist, moved to Palestine. But Rita herself went to the London School of Economics, in the great days of [Harold] Laski, to take a B.Sc. In 1935 [After marriage], they moved off to Palestine, apparently for good. But in fact the move was unsuccessful and disturbing. Neither Rita nor Echelon felt at home in the intense Zionist atmosphere, and both of them rejected both Zionist nationalism and the Jewish faith. Rita became increasingly an advocate of closer Jewish/Arab understanding. In 1938 they returned to London disenchanted.' Morgan, Kenneth O. (1987: 239-240)

beneficial to the indigenous peoples, particularly in the context of economic development and financial investment. Hinden had published in 1942 an appraisal of the economic development and benefits to the native peoples achieved by Zionist colonisation of Palestine. This not only advanced the Zionist's justification for establishing a Jewish/Zionist State in Palestine, but also in the justification for the negative consequences for the Palestinians of being dispossessed and subsumed by an immigrant population. For Hinden:

‘The economic development of Palestine has been one of the few triumphs of the Versailles world; in many respects the rate of progress has been unequalled and in all respects the approach has been bold and original. Unfortunately, economic progress had been overshadowed by political conflict, and the world had come to think of Palestine in the years before the war as a battleground or warring nationalisms, a hotbed of murder, rioting and rebellion. But, if there is a lesson the opening-up of Palestine can teach to other colonies, that lesson must be taught . . . Jewish colonisation in Palestine has achieved its economic success . . .’⁴⁰¹

The central premise of Hinden's economic and social assessment of Palestine became a blueprint for Labour post-war approach to the colonies: ‘a model of what may be achieved.’⁴⁰² But perhaps more importantly in terms of the contradiction between socialist principles and Zionist colonialism, it also firmly founded the notion within sections of the party that colonisation was essentially justifiable, particularly if the resulting economic development were beneficial to the country and its native contingent.

The Backbench Revolt of 1949

While success in redirecting Bevin and Attlee remained limited, rather more success was made among the backbenches, culminating in the revolt in January 1949. Between 1945 and 1949 the Labour Party had tussled with the issue of Palestine and political Zionism. Unable to reconcile Palestinian and political Zionist differences,

⁴⁰¹ Hinden, Rita *Palestine and Colonial Economic Development*, *The Political Quarterly*, Vol. 13, Issue 1, January 1942, pp.91

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, pp.99

and with increasingly violent attacks on the British by armed political Zionist and Palestinian nationalists forces, and apparently contrary to its long-standing support for the political Zionist cause, the Labour government referred the 'Palestine problem' to the United Nations (August 1947). The Palestine mandate concluded after the subsequent November 1947 UN Partition Plan precipitated the division of Palestine into Jewish and Palestinian territories, the withdrawal of the British and the establishment of the State of Israel in May 1948. For those among the Labour Party who were committed to the political Zionism of the 1944 statement, the UN referral had represented Bevin's greatest betrayal; whilst the subsequent establishment of Israel ironically represented their greatest victory, even if it represented a defeat for Bevin and Britain in Palestine, what Bethell calls a 'David-and-Goliath outcome.'⁴⁰³

Even after the creation of Israel in May 1948 and the departure of the British in August, the issue continued to cause problems for the party and Labour figures. A great deal of these difficulties for Attlee and Bevin were generated by the specific lobbying group of pro-Israel Labour MPs led by Hugh Dalton and Richard Crossman; one of their activities is captured during an Adjournment Debate on whether Britain (Labour) should recognise the State of Israel in July 1948. A Front Bench MP - Christopher Mayhew - was required to explain the government's policy:

'In the Official's Gallery, over to my left, my Private Secretary, perhaps my soul supporter present, would be silently praying that I would stick to my brief. And behind me, wide-awake, well-informed, passionate, articulate and aggressive, would be a group of twenty or thirty pro-Israeli Labour members. Most of them would be Jewish. Sydney Silverman, Maurice Edelman and Ian Mikardo would surely be among them, even at eight o'clock in the morning; and also Israel's most brilliant non-Jewish supporter, Dick Crossman.'⁴⁰⁴

The political Zionist lobby within the Labour Party comprised a number of prominent gentile and Jewish pro-Israel MPs; at the heart of this group was Ian Mikardo.

⁴⁰³ Bethell, Nicholas (1979: 147) Chapter 5, *Partition and Terror*, Chapter 10, *The Honey and the Sting*

⁴⁰⁴ Adams, Michael & Mayhew, Christopher (2000: 18)

Thomas [Tam] Dalyell⁴⁰⁵ claims: 'If [Richard] Crossman was the intellectual of the 'old left', then Ian Mikardo, above all, was its arch-manoeuvrer. He joined the Labour Party and *Poale Zion* in the late 1920s, giving his first public address in 1922, aged 13, to the Portsmouth Zionist Society. Thus began a lifelong commitment to political Zionism and Israel, a cause shared by those with similar stories to tell, such as Sidney Silverman and Harold Lever.'^{406 407}

The experience of Mikardo's parents in Eastern Europe was to shape his whole political life. His parents had come to Britain as refugees from the Tsarist Empire in the nineteenth century. Mikardo conveys the circumstances of their flight:

'The poverty and bleakness of life within the Pale was one of the potent incentives to emigration. But there were many others, including periodic famines and epidemics of cholera. Every few years the anti-semites of the tsarist peoples erupted into pogroms of murder, rape, pillage and arson, and every such wave, such as the massive Kishinev pogrom of 1903, added a sharp stimulus to the urge to emigrate.'⁴⁰⁸

The extended families of both Mikardo's parents disappeared during the European Holocaust. Of his mother's family at the end of the 1939-1945 war Mikardo states 'there was no trace;'⁴⁰⁹ his father's extended family fared little better:

'During the war Kuto [Nr Lodz, Poland] was fought through twice: I went there a year or so after the end of the War to look for any trace of my cousins and found only rubble and silence. Doubtless they met their end either in battle or in air-raids or at Auschwitz.'⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁵ Thomas [Tam] Dalyell (b.1932) MP: (West Lothian, 1962-1983), (Linlithgow, 1983-2005)

⁴⁰⁶ Plant, Raymond. Beech, Matt. and Hickson, Kevin [Editors] (2004: 248-249) *The struggle for Labour's Soul: Understanding Labour's Political Thought Since 1945*, Chapter 13, Tam Dalyell, *The Old Left*, (London: Routledge)

⁴⁰⁷ Harold Lever (b.1914-d.1995) MP: (Manchester Exchange, 1945-50), (Manchester Cheetham, 1950-1974), and (Manchester Central, 1974-1979)

⁴⁰⁸ Mikardo, Ian (1988: 6-10) Chapter 1

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid., (1988: 6)

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., (1988: 7)

Meanwhile, the debates and division within Labour continued intermittently and to varying degrees from 1945 to into 1949. Gaitskell's biographer, Philip M. Williams, quoted the future Labour Leader Hugh Gaitskell as he conveys a sense of the tensions the subject caused for individuals, section and the party generally:

'Outside Europe, the great issue at the moment [1949] was Palestine, where Ernest Bevin's policy outraged Labour's Zionist traditions. Here Gaitskell, in his moderate fashion, sympathized with the feelings'⁴¹¹

Approaching the first anniversary of Israel's founding, the issue of the British government's - Labour's - recognition of the Hebrew State re-invigorated debate and exposed - once again - significant divisions within the party. Having failed to draw a line under the subject of Palestine-political Zionism, Hugh Gaitskell (Minister of Fuel and Power) recounts that Aneurin Bevan had forewarned him that 'there will probably be a lot of trouble about Palestine in the party.'⁴¹² It was an accurate prediction by Bevan, as Gaitskell recounts:

'The Debate took place on the Adjournment and the Tories decided to vote against the Government. About 60 Labour M.P.s abstained. Fortunately the Whips had done their stuff and we had a majority of about 90. I think a good many of those who abstained on our side did not realise they were really risking the fall of the Government. On the other hand I must confess to some sympathy with their point of view.'⁴¹³

Gaitskell's account of the parliamentary rebellion by 60 Labour MPs against the leadership's policy position - not recognising Israel for fear of jeopardising wider British interests by offending the Arab States - illustrates that the strength of pro-

⁴¹¹ Williams, Philip M (1979: 165)

⁴¹² Williams, Philip M. [Editor] (1983: 97) Chapter 2, *Minister for Fuel and Power* [1949], quoting, Hugh Gaitskell, February 2, 1949, *Palestine*

⁴¹³ Ibid., (1983: 97)

Israel sentiment within the party at that time, although Gaitskell also notes that there were additional motivations behind the intense lobbying in favour of the rebellion:

‘Nye [Aneurin] came out quite openly against [Ernest] Bevin and seemed to be anxious to start an intrigue to get rid of him. . . . I think most of us feel fairly critical of the foreign policy. Nye was particularly indignant because apparently there had been a considerable attack on Bevin in the Cabinet, as a result of which it was agreed that we should recognise Israel. In return for this concession [to] which Bevin unwillingly acceded, he demanded and got a resolution of confidence in his Palestine policy. He then, according to Nye, gradually tried to slip out of the recognition decision However, we have now recognised Israel and if only the peace negotiations are successful it looks as if that particular trouble will be over. If they are not . . . the Government will be a good deal more cautious over, what so many people believed to be, their pro-Arab policy.’^{414 415}

The gradual capture of Bevan by the political Zionist movement was another major coup: as the archetypal socialist and vehement long-standing political opponent of Ernest Bevin - largely as a result of domestic policy and ideological differences - he was a double-barrelled asset. As Morgan notes:

‘Aneurin Bevan alone kept the flag of the left-wing socialism aloft throughout – which gave him a matchless authority amongst the constituency parties and in party conference. Bevan certainly had many points of dissent from the rest of the Cabinet. In foreign affairs, . . . as a constant critic on Palestine.’⁴¹⁶

⁴¹⁴ Ibid., (1983: 98) *quoting*, Hugh Gaitskell, February 2, 1949, *Palestine*

⁴¹⁵ Bevan’s personal antagonisms with Bevin were long-standing: Bevan had said of Bevin in 1945, again on the issue of Palestine, ‘He’s a big bumble bee caught in a web and he thinks he’s the spider.’ Foot, Michael (1973: 35) Chapter 1, 1945, *quoting*, Hugh Dalton (1962: 129) *High Tide and After*, (London: Muller)

⁴¹⁶ Morgan. Kenneth O. (1984: 57) *Labour in Power 1945-1951*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press)

The Labour Party in the 1950s and the Suez Crisis

After Labour's defeat at the 1951 General Election, there followed a period of thirteen years in opposition. In 1955 Hugh Gaitskell assumed the party leadership with Attlee's retirement, only to be confronted - in 1956 - by one of the largest British foreign policy crises in living memory.

By 1956 Colonel Abdel Nasser (Prime Minister and later President of Egypt), who had risen to power via a military coup, had assumed not only the mantle of champion of the Palestine issues and the Palestinian cause but, as the head of the largest and most advanced Arab State, he had additional ambitions to represent the entire Arab region of the Middle East in the face of continuing European colonialism and imperialism. In response to rising tensions along the Egyptian-Israeli border, Nasser ordered the blocking of the Straits of Tiran in September 1955 to Israeli shipping bound for the Israeli port of Eilat. The withdrawal of an offer by the United States and British to fund the building of the Aswan Dam led Nasser to respond by nationalising the Suez Canal.⁴¹⁷ In response to these growing antagonisms between Egypt and Israel, Gaitskell initially appeared to prefer a policy reflecting Labour's historic affiliation with political Zionism and now with Israel, as Gaitskell's biographer - Geoffrey McDermott - recounts:

'He [Gaitskell] recalled that the 1955 Labour Party conference had come out overwhelmingly in favour of a defensive alliance with Israel. He could not pretend that even now the danger was entirely over. 'I agree with our friends from *Poale Zion* (the affiliated union of British Jews) that we must not forget the rights of Israel and Israeli shipping.'⁴¹⁸

However, when in late October 1956 Israel launched a pre-agreed assault on Egypt providing the calculated pretext for Britain and France to invade Egypt under the

⁴¹⁷ For a comprehensive account of the political, diplomatic and military aspects of the Suez affair see: Kyle, Keith (1992) *Suez: Britain's End of Empire in the Middle East*, (London: I. B. Tauris)

⁴¹⁸ McDermott, Geoffrey (1972: 123) *Leader Lost: A Biography of Hugh Gaitskell*, quoting, Hugh Gaitskell, Labour Party Conference, October 1956, (London: Leslie Frewin)

guise of keeping the two warring sides apart, while protecting a strategic global interest - the Suez Canal itself, the Labour Party was again caught in the tangled web of its own *essential dilemma*. At the level of its ideological dimensions, the British Prime Minister, Antony Eden, had clearly committed Britain to an underhand and essentially colonialist act which met with international approbation, not to mention American frustration (the US voting in the United Nations to censure the aggressors). Yet, Labour was unable to unequivocally condemn the British invasion. In condemning the assault by Britain, France and Israel on Egypt, Labour would be forced to criticise Israel and Labor Party with which Labour had deep long-standing sympathies and empathies, combined with long-term and close associations.⁴¹⁹

Gaitskell himself chose a position that amounted to little more than a fudge. At a personal level, he supported Israel, but he 'nevertheless felt able to reconcile this with an insistence on opposing any military action which was not sanctioned by the Security Council of the United Nations.'⁴²⁰ Unwilling to cast Israel as the unprovoked party, he chose to identify Nasser as the villain, and despite his discomfort with the British involvement, Gaitskell emphasised the latter as the 'greater evil.' Williams conveys an assessment of Gaitskell's thinking:

'Britain had a major legitimate interest in the Canal, for most of her oil came through it and nearly half the ships using it were British. While nationalisation alone gave no justification for imposing an international solution by force, the manner in which Nasser had acted showed he had an ulterior aim: to score a prestige triumph over the West and so promote the expansion of Arab nationalism - or the aggrandisement of Egypt.'⁴²¹

Adding:

⁴¹⁹ Academic Keith Kyle says that by the early months of 1956 the Labour Party 'presented the most pro-Israel image of any party in the eight years since the creation of that state. . . .' Kyle, Keith (1991: 89) *Suez. Chapter 5, Turning Against Nasser*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson)

⁴²⁰ Wilson, Harold (1981: 248)

⁴²¹ Williams, Philip M. [Editor] (1979: 420)

‘Gaitskell never believed in the ‘Third World’ right or wrong, or approved of ambitious military dictators when their skins were dark; and his sympathy for the Israelis, felt by most Labour people since the 1930s, had been keen since his visit in 1953.’⁴²²

Emulating a response by Labour figures extending to the early 1930s of categorising Arab leaders as Nazi or Fascists, Gaitskell had no hesitation in emulating Anthony Eden in associating the actions and intentions of the Egyptian leader - as a greater pan-Arab nationalist - with those of Hitler towards Czechoslovakia and Poland in 1939 - to attain ‘mastery of the Middle East.’⁴²³

‘It is all very familiar. It is exactly the same that we encountered from Mussolini and Hitler in those years before the war.’⁴²⁴

Plaudits of Gaitskell’s parliamentary address stated he ‘spoke for England’ and ‘not for your party only.’⁴²⁵ Other key Labour figure with sympathies for Israel regardless of the follies of the Suez invasion and Gaitskell’s policy position reflected the strength of support for political Zionism within the party which had undoubtedly prevailed since the death of Ernest Bevin. Due to the on-set of illness Bevin had been replaced as foreign secretary in early March 1951⁴²⁶ by Herbert Morrison, an avid political-Zionist. Morrison himself was not without his critics:

‘Despite such a broadening of his horizon, his views on foreign affairs were superficial. He was not a fluent speaker of another language, nor did he read foreign literature. He was not knowledgeable about the history and culture of

⁴²² Ibid., (1979: 420-421)

⁴²³ Ibid., (1979: 422) Part Five, Chapter 15, *Suez 1956-7*, i, *Colonel Nasser’s Rhineland?* quoting, Hugh Gaitskell, notes, 557 *H.C. Deb.*: b. cols 1609-17, August 2, 1956

⁴²⁴ Ibid., (1979: 422) quoting, Hugh Gaitskell

⁴²⁵ Ibid., (1979: 437), quoting, Lady Bonham Carter, *Notes*, Lady Violet to HG: a. 4 November 1956 (p.118-7); b. again, 10 November 1956, praising his alpha-plus standard.

⁴²⁶ Ernest Bevin became Lord Privy Seal in March 1951 and died the following month.

other countries and he never studied in-depth problems of international policy. He simply had not the time to make himself a specialist. He formed his views of foreign policy without the detailed analysis he gave to home policies, tending to accept the conventional line of the party, which fitted neatly into the set of attitudes he had acquired before 1914.’⁴²⁷

With regards to the Middle East specifically, Hugh Dalton said of Morrison:

‘[Herbert] Morrison’s touch was erratic in the Middle East. As an old patriot of Zionism with many links with the Jewish community in London, he did not greatly like the Arabs (including the non-Arab [Persian] Iranians, for this purpose). Added to this was his residual imperialism which led him to refer in 1946 to the ‘jolly old empire.’⁴²⁸

Kenneth Morgan claims that Morrison’s long-standing political Zionism and anti-Arabism led him to give support to Israel’s actions during Suez:

‘In 1956 it was to move him to warm enthusiasm for the Anglo-French [Israel] attack on Egypt.’⁴²⁹

Indeed, Morgan continues:

‘Morrison was passionately pro-Israel and in recent years had spoken up strongly in her [Israel’s] defence, urging the British government to guarantee her frontiers and supply her with sufficient arms to deter the surrounding Arab states which consistently boasted of her impending genocidal annihilation.

⁴²⁷ Donoghue, Bernard & Jones, George W. (2001: 249) *Herbert Morrison: Portrait of a Politician*, Chapter 18, *Foreign Affairs in the 1930s*, (London: Phoenix Press)

⁴²⁸ Morgan, Kenneth O. (1987: 186) Chapter 3, *The Years of Power 1945-1970*, *Herbert Morrison*

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, (1987: 186)

Before leaving for the United States in September he called on Eden at 10 Downing Street, to restate his support for the government's tough policy.⁴³⁰

Other Labour members were less convinced, one of them being the shadow Foreign Secretary, George Brown.⁴³¹

'The problem facing the Shadow Cabinet from 26 July onwards in one way was not easy, not least because Hugh Gaitskell and George Brown [Shadow Foreign Affairs] had been for years in basic disagreement about the Middle East. Hugh Gaitskell was close to the Israelis, George was regarded by many pro-Jewish Labour MPs as a 'raging Arab.' It is true that he was closer to a number of Arab leaders, and was indeed later shattered almost to the point of tears when King Feisal and Huri-es-Said of Iraq were murdered.'⁴³²

In relation to Suez, Harold Wilson says of Brown, Labour, and his own position:

'When the Suez war began, George [Brown], in all fairness and within his rights, was able to insist that, as they had agreed that the party could not support aggression, the fact that the Israelis struck first meant that the PLP could not support them. Both of them, however, and indeed all of us, were agreed that we could not support any resort to war which did not receive UN approval.'⁴³³

One of the youngest rising MPs in the Labour Party at this time was Tony Benn.⁴³⁴ His response to Suez and the Labour leadership's position exemplified many of the contradictions felt by Labour figures. Tony Benn's biographer - Jad Adams -

⁴³⁰ Donoughue, Bernard & Jones, George W. (2001: 546)

⁴³¹ George Brown (b.1914-d.1985) MP: (Belper, 1945-1951, 1955-1970); Deputy Leader, 1960-1970.

⁴³² Wilson, Harold (1981: 248)

⁴³³ Ibid., (1981: 248)

⁴³⁴ Anthony "Tony" Wedgwood Benn (b.1925) MP: (Bristol South East 1950-1961, 1963-1983), (Chesterfield, 1984-2001)

identifies the source of the dilemma felt by Benn at the time as a moderate political Zionist backbench MP - then on the soft left-wing of the party:

‘Why did he [Benn] pay such attention to colonial affairs? Partly it was his father’s influence - the former Secretary of State for India had always been an international politician. He was automatically on the side of the independence movements. “I had anti-imperialism in my bloodstream,” he said, “the old left-liberal position. My interest was aroused when I was in Africa and the Middle East during the war. Colonialism had to end. . . . It wasn’t a very popular cause to take up except with the constituencies.”⁴³⁵

With such a perspective, it was not surprising, as Adams continues to point out, that:

‘Suez was a particular embarrassment to the Labour Party. Almost everyone in the party agreed in principle with Nasser’s act of nationalisation, but even Nye Bevan was so critical of Nasser that it was impossible for him wholeheartedly to oppose Eden. ‘Nasser’s a thug,’ he said, ‘and he needs to be taught a lesson.’

In a speech of bitter denunciation on 2 August, Gaitskell compared Nasser to Hitler and Mussolini. He was wildly cheered by the Conservatives but heard in near silence by the benches behind him. Benn wrote in his diary, ‘I felt sick as I listened. I wanted to shout “shame.” I very nearly did buttonhole him afterwards and say that his speech had made me want to vomit.’⁴³⁶

⁴³⁵ Adams, Jad (1992: 95) *Tony Benn*, Chapter 8, *The Cold War and Colonial Freedom*, (London: Macmillan)

⁴³⁶ Ibid., (1992: 117) Chapter 10, *The Suez Campaign* quoting, Tony Benn, November 5, 1956, (Benn is recalling the event on August 2, 1956)

The moderate backbench left-wing MP - Denis Healey,⁴³⁷ - meanwhile responded with consternation at the role of the British, French and Israeli governments in their collusion to attack Egypt:

‘In the whole of my political life I have never been so angry for so long as I was during the Suez affair.’⁴³⁸ ‘The strength of my feelings over Suez led me at least to speak like a human being with emotion, rather than like a soulless automaton.’⁴³⁹

Although Aneurin Bevan was a leading pro-Israel MP, by 1956 he had become aware that Israel was not to be considered beyond reproach with regard to its conduct:

‘I am not saying for a single moment that the Israelis did not have the utmost provocation. What we are saying is that it is not possible to create peace in the Middle East by jeopardising the peace of the world.’⁴⁴⁰

Ultimately, the Labour leadership settled on a policy position that sheltered under the commitment to the United Nations and to which all the party, whether the committed lobbyists for political Zionism or anti-colonial leftists, could commit. In the Commons debates themselves, as academic Leon Epstein says:

‘Labour’s arguments in the House of Commons were based heavily on the wrongfulness of acting outside the United Nations and finally in defiance of the United Nations. Here Labour was consistent. . . .’⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁷ Denis Healey (b.1917) MP: (Leeds South East, 1952-1955), (Leeds East, 1955-1992); Shadow Foreign Secretary, 1970-1972, 1980-1987; Secretary of State for Defence, 1964-1970; Deputy Leader, 1980-1983.

⁴³⁸ Healey, Denis (1990: 169)

⁴³⁹ Ibid., (1990: 174)

⁴⁴⁰ Campbell, John (1994: 322-323) *Nye Bevan: A Biography*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton) quoting, Aneurin Bevan, *News Chronicle*, November 5, 1956

⁴⁴¹ Epstein, Leon D. (1964: 80) *British Politics in the Suez Crisis*, (London: Pall Mall)

Many ardent lobbyists for political Zionism in the party were less content with the equivocation in the support for Israel. Apart from leading Jewish MPs like Ian Mikardo, Sydney Silverman and Emanuel Shinwell,⁴⁴² Epstein claims that during the Suez crisis the 'element of potential disaffection consisted of the 17 Labour MPs who were Jews, or at least of the several who were active and devoted Zionists.'⁴⁴³ However, when it came to the crucial parliamentary vote to support the UN position, Epstein says:

'They too supported the Labour critique after some initial doubts and ambiguity.' None of this group . . . deliberately abstained in the crucial division...⁴⁴⁴

In sum, Labour's policy through the course of Suez was to move from Gaitskell's initial sympathy with Eden's decision on the basis of Nasser's provocation with Israel, to a position that no action could or should be taken without United Nations approval and support. This showed that the party had to work through the issues arising from the incompatibility of political Zionist sentiments within the party (and particularly among key leadership figures and a vocal committed caucus of lobbyists) and socialist commitments to an anti-imperialist struggle against invaders of all persuasions. The answer for Labour was not to confront the dilemma directly, but to move the agenda to one with which they could all identify and to which they were all - as socialists - committed, the primacy of the United Nations as the location for dispute arbitration.

Conclusion

In some respects the period from 1945-1951 represents a high water-mark in Labour-political Zionism relations. Yet they were also arguably the most contentious years in Labour's transformation from what was said to be a policy overwhelmingly in favour of political Zionism policy position and party consensus, to a policy position which

⁴⁴² Emanuel [Manny] Shinwell [Baron Shinwell, 1970] (b.1884-d.1986) MP: (Linlithgowshire, 1922-1924, 1928-1931), (Seaham, 1935-1950) and (Easington, 1950-1970); Minister for War, 1947-1950; Minister of Defense, 1950-1951

⁴⁴³ Epstein, Leon D. (1964: 79) Chapter 5, *Parliamentary Conflict*

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., (1964: 79)

favoured a solution based on diplomatic compromise and *realpolitik* on the one hand, and less contentious ideological positioning on the other.

Clement Attlee and Ernest Bevin inherited what was a largely an idealist Labour foreign policy based on the decidedly pro-political Zionist 1944 Post-War Statement. The 1944 policy position had been formulated while Labour was a member of the war coalition government, amid a party distracted by colossal world events and deeply vexing domestic circumstances while Labour was still relatively ignorant of foreign affairs generally, and Palestine and political Zionism in particular. The writing of the statement by Hugh Dalton and contributing influence of Harold Laski ensured that Labour policy was overtly pro-political Zionist. The core elements of the policy in establishing a Jewish/political Zionist state in all of mandate Palestine and beyond, and the encouragement of the Palestinians to vacate Palestine and transfer elsewhere, were extreme even by the standards of the era. Yet for the Labour pro-political Zionist figures the *essential dilemma* generated in part by the realities of political Zionism and the consequences for the Palestinians was overridden by the calamity of the Jews in the Holocaust and the plight of Jewish survivors, which morally surmounted any consequences that might occur for the Palestinians.

However, on Labour assuming power in July 1945, the 1944 policy was overtaken by events. The idealism of 1944 was replaced by the realism of government responsibility. Attlee, Bevin and the Foreign Office deemed that those greater interests lay with the wider Middle East, notably with the Arab states and peoples, and Islamic regions of the Indian sub-continent, Malaysia and South East Asia. For Labour and related figures who were not pro-political Zionists, the *essential dilemma* was superseded by the need to maintain and advance British national and strategic interests that were seen as requiring a favourable position towards Arab opinion concerning Palestine. Thus, the *internal determinants* of governing and the *external determinants* of the post-war world and British national interests converged to subvert the pro-political Zionist policy of 1944 as the political aspects overrode the more ideological and psychological aspects upon which the policy was based. Within the Labour government the tussle to affect policy and the party consensus led to the emergence of an identifiable group of pro-political Zionism/Israel Labour figures who were determined to challenge Attlee, Bevin and the Foreign Office pro-British

interests position. For many of them, Bevin's pragmatism was better understood as anti-Semitism. As an *internal determinant* of Labour policy, however, Bevin's motivations were matched by intra-party squabbles over the distribution of key posts and by personality clashes among the key figures of the party.

The early *external determinants* of the period included the Jewish anti-British terrorism which so alienated Attlee and Bevin from the political Zionist cause, the engagement of the United States in the issue which demanded a British response, the ongoing need to find a resolution for the Jewish displaced persons languishing in camps in Europe, the influence of the Foreign Office and its officials on the party leadership's thinking, and the contrasting influences of Zionist lobbies and Arab embassies.

Once out of government, the party was relieved of the need to balance pro-political Zionist sympathies with *real politik*. However, a reversion to a pro-political Zionist position was made complicated by the collusion of Israel in 1956 in a last British imperial adventure. Under the influence of pro-Israel support among the leadership, and intense lobbying by a section of the backbenchers, Labour avoided the evidence of the irreconcilability of its pro-political Zionism with its anti-imperialist agendas by demonising Nasser as a provocative dictator on the one hand, and - as with Palestine in 1947 - referring the matter to the authority of the United Nations. But while the essential pro-political Zionism of Labour policy remained unchallenged, the Suez debacle had forced many in the Labour Party to recognise the *essential dilemma* that such a policy represented.

In terms of the *essential dilemma*, it could also be argued that Ernest Bevin with his refusal to abandon his belief - and therefore Labour's policy position - that a lasting resolution required an equal emphasis upon the case of the 'Arabs' [Palestinians] as well as the Jews and Zionists, was in some ways an attempt to address the socialist ideological contradiction which undoubtedly troubled Bevin. On accepting that his and Labour's position on Palestine - in the context of Britain's dire economic post-war predicament - relied on the support of the Americans, and realizing that as a result of Zionist pressure this American support would only be forthcoming if the political Zionists were given everything they demanded, Bevin, in the face of an American

‘refusal to form a common front over the Palestine question,’⁴⁴⁵ still refused to enforce a policy upon the Palestinians which he felt inherently unfair. In an effort to diminish the influence of the *essential dilemma*, and avoid jeopardising the ‘special relationship’ further, he handed the issue to the United Nations, and Britain withdrew from Palestine.

There is also little doubt that the greatest contribution to the psychological aspect of the *essential dilemma* in this period was generated by the Holocausts and its Jewish survivors, and the increasing violence and British casualties in Palestine. However, despite the tremendous sympathy these events and predicaments generated in Labour and related figures, the role of the ideological and political aspects of the dilemma were also evident as additional key figures realised the contradictions between socialism and the realities of political Zionism and its agenda for Palestine, particularly as the consequences for the Palestinians and British strategic interests became ever more evident and related to the anti-colonialism and Arab nationalisms of the post-1945 era.

⁴⁴⁵ Maclean, Donald (1970: 45) *British Foreign Policy since Suez 1956-1968*, Chapter 2, *Anglo-American Relations, The Special Relationship*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton)

Chapter 3

Addressing the *Essential Dilemma* (1963-1979)

Labour Party Deviations and Open Parliamentary Rebellion

Introduction

The Middle East in the period from 1963 to the close of the 1970s was characterised principally by two wars in 1967 and 1973. While changes in the Labour leadership from Hugh Gaitskell to Harold Wilson, James “Jim” Callaghan⁴⁴⁶ and Michael Foot,⁴⁴⁷ largely ensured continuity of a pro-political Zionist position from the head of the party hierarchy, the evidence presented here suggests that the party experienced a progressive deviation away from the traditional pro-Zionist consensus and policy trajectory principally as a result of these *external determinants* (wars).

This chapter illustrates that while Israel’s attack on Egypt during Suez had certainly raised a few discerning eye-brows among Labour figures, a significant deviation process began to develop in earnest in large part as a result of the 1967 ‘Six-Day’ War and the ideological contradictions the war raised inside the party. This deviation process continued to expand and accelerate in the following decade as a result of the 1973 war, culminating with a section of the party eventually erupting into an open parliamentary rebellion in 1973, in a ‘show case’ rejection of the Labour leadership’s pro-Israel policy preferences. Further *external determinants* which accelerated this deviation process included: the election of the right-wing Likud bloc to government in Israel in 1977 and the parallel electoral decline of the Labor Party of Israel. These external events occurred in conjunction with a number of important *internal*

⁴⁴⁶ James “Jim” Callaghan (B.1912-d.2005) MP: (Cardiff South, 1945-1950), Cardiff South East, 1950-1983) (Cardiff South and Penarth, 1983-1980); PM: 1976-1979; Foreign Secretary, 1974-1976; Chancellor, 1964-1967; Labour leader, 1976-1980)

⁴⁴⁷ Michael Foot (b.1913) MP: (Plymouth Devonport, 1945-1955), (Ebbw Vale, 1960-1992); Labour leader and leader of the Opposition, 1980-1983.

determinants, most notably the establishment of two lobby groups: the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding (CAABU) (1969), and the Labour Middle East Council (LMEC) (1969).

The reorientation of some Labour figures positions was visible in the language which abounded in internal party discourse and specifically the reversal of the 'David versus Goliath' vocabulary which had previously characterised the Israel-Arab debate. The end result was a dramatic shift in the party's overwhelmingly pro-political Zionist/Israel consensus, and subsequently, policy, particularly after 1973, to a more balanced position. As was noted in 1997, Labour-Israel relations by the early 1980s had changed so significantly that it was described as being 'a time when some in the Labour Party worried that to confess to being a friend of Israel counted you amongst the politically incorrect.'⁴⁴⁸

In terms of the *essential dilemma* condition the 1967 and 1973 wars proved to be an important and lasting influence as any lingering conceptions that the psychological, ideological and political components of the condition had been allayed with the foundation of Israel in 1948 were re-ignited by the re-emergence of the Palestinians as a key component of the wider Arab-Israel conflict. The result was that Labour was once again compelled to face and attempt to address the psychological, ideological and political components of the *essential dilemma*. This predicament was compounded by two wars that threatened British national and strategic interests as Labour's neutrality and efforts to secure Arab oil supplies and trade with Arab states contrasted with efforts to maintain the party's traditional pro-political Zionist position.

The Premiership of Harold Wilson

If Clement Attlee as party leader was the defining Labour figure from 1935 to 1955, Harold Wilson⁴⁴⁹ was a similarly defining leading figure from 1963 to 1976. The second longest serving Leader and Prime Minister in Labour's history, Wilson had a

⁴⁴⁸ Blair, Tony *Speech: Tony Blair the Labour Friends of Israel*, December 9, 1997, Labour Party Press Release, (London: Labour Party)

⁴⁴⁹ Harold Wilson (b.1916-d.1995) MP: (Ormskirk, 1945-1950), (Huyton, 1950-1983); PM: 1964-1970, 1974-1976; Labour leader, 1963-1976.

brilliant undergraduate career at Oxford as an economist which secured an early post in the 1945 government as Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Works.

In terms of the Israel-Palestinian issue, Wilson is viewed by Watkins as the ‘most pro-Israeli prime minister there had ever been’⁴⁵⁰ and as such, any account of the *basis and nature of relations* between Labour and political Zionism (Israel) in the context of the Israel-Palestinian conflict must incorporate the origins, influence and legacies of Harold Wilson, not least because his deep, long-standing interest, but also his influence that extended into retirement and to Wilson’s successor as Labour leader, James Callaghan. While his predecessor Hugh Gaitskell⁴⁵¹ was considered to be pro-Israel in a ‘moderate fashion’⁴⁵² Wilson was widely known to be staunchly pro-Israel. The three key biographies on Harold Wilson⁴⁵³ testify that the origins of this pro-political Zionism/Israel position are as complex as they are protracted. Wilson is known to have disliked being referred to as a Zionist, yet his established sympathies for political Zionism and later the State of Israel, generated some interesting observations. As Philip Ziegler said of Wilson during his university experience:

‘Wilson was abnormally free of racial prejudice except in so far as it was a racial prejudice to find Jews generally more attractive than the rest of mankind.’⁴⁵⁴

The most detailed insights come not from the numerous biographies, but Wilson’s own writings. *The Chariot of Israel* (1981) is a swirling and weighty account of Labour’s relations with political Zionism and Israel from the mid 1930s to the 1980s written almost entirely from Wilson’s own perspective. In addition to an historical overview, the book provides some detailed evidence as to the developmental process

⁴⁵⁰ Watkins, David (06.07.2003: 10) *Interview: Watkins-Nelson*, Surrey, London

⁴⁵¹ Harold Wilson succeeded Acting Leader - George Brown (January 18-February 14, 1963) - as leader after Hugh Gaitskell’s sudden death from Lupus Erythematosus aged 56.

⁴⁵² Williams, Philip M (1979: 165)

⁴⁵³ See: Pimlott, Ben (1992), Morgan, Austen (1992) and Ziegler, Philip (1993)

⁴⁵⁴ Ziegler, Philip (1993: 76) *Wilson: The Authorised Life of Lord Wilson of Rievaulx*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson)

that brought Wilson and ultimately Labour to a point of greater deviation and open rebellion during his tenure of the party, something not witnessed since 1949.

Wilson plainly defines the origins of his pro-political Zionism as being founded in the *related religious philosophies* aspect of the *essential dilemma*:

‘In Britain, as in the United States, there has been and is very strong support for Israel and her people, from politicians and communities extending far beyond the relatively small number of Jews who are citizens.

How far this is due to admiration for the courage and tenacity of the Israelis, how far - as is currently true in my own case - it is in part a response to the teaching of religious history in our day schools and Sunday schools, chapels, churches, kirk and conventicles, I would find it hard to say.’⁴⁵⁵

As one of the most devout Christian Labour leaders since Ramsay MacDonald, Wilson’s personal account continues to illustrate what he sees as the numerous associations between the ideals of socialism and beliefs of Christianity with those of Judaism and political Zionism. The religious aspects are as immediate and significant as they are numerous; the very title *‘The Chariot of Israel’* is taken from the Old Testament⁴⁵⁶ and further biblical references and associations occur throughout, particularly in the recounting of Jewish religious history:

‘The Lord will set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people He will set up an ensign for the nations, and will assemble the dispersed of Israel, and gather together the scattered of Judah from the four corners of the earth.’⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁵ Wilson, Harold (1981: ix) *Preface*

⁴⁵⁶ *The Holy Bible, Kings*, Chapter 2, Verse 12, King James Version

⁴⁵⁷ Wilson, Harold (1981: 197) Chapter 7, *Eretz Israel*, quoting, *The Holy Bible, Isaiah*, Chapter 11, Verse 11, King James Version

The depth of Wilson's Christian beliefs during his political career is well known and recorded outside the confines of his own accounts. Seldon claims that until the leadership of Tony Blair (1994-2007) the inclusiveness of Wilson's religious faith was arguably unique in the post-1945 era:

'Since 1945 the only Labour leader to refer to religious beliefs and practices in relation to active politics was Harold Wilson, who is described as a 'Congregationalist' that claimed he became a socialist '*because he was a Christian.*' He appointed ten practising believers to his Cabinet in 1964, and asked for a service to be organised in the House of Commons chapel after the 1964 General Election to bless the new government.'⁴⁵⁸

What is less clear is how Wilson's Christian faith translated into unswerving support for political Zionism and Israel, particularly when it became obvious that the Zionist agenda for Palestine contradicted some of the basic ideological principles of socialism, and indeed Christian philosophy. In *The Chariot of Israel* a key part of Wilson's pro-political Zionist argument is derived from the historical origins of both the *related religious philosophies* aspects of the Labour-political Zionist relationship and the political sources of Zionist influence resulting from their *shared socialist ideology*. The most notable example is the reference to the Conservative Foreign Secretary - Arthur Balfour - with whom Wilson very obviously aligns himself on religious grounds - if not entirely politically in domestic politics then certainly in relation to political Zionism:

'Balfour's interest in the Jews and their history was lifelong. It originated in the Old Testament training of his mother, and in his Scottish upbringing. As he grew up, his intellectual admiration and sympathy for certain aspects of Jewish philosophy and culture grew also, and the problem of the Jews in the modern world seemed to him of immense importance.'⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁸ Seldon, Anthony. Ballinger, Chris. Collins, Daniel & Snowden, Peter (2004: 515)

⁴⁵⁹ Wilson, Harold (1981: 34) *quoting*, Blanche E C. Dugdale, (1939: 433) *Arthur James Balfour*, Volume I, (London: Hutchinson)

The most important aspect of Arthur Balfour's Christian pro-political Zionism was its early effect on Wilson. As Wilson states:

'He [Balfour] always talked eagerly on this, and I remember in childhood imbibing from him the idea that Christian religion and civilisation owes to Judaism an immeasurable debt, shamefully ill repaid.'⁴⁶⁰

As an academic reviewer of *The Chariot of Israel* Mark Lytle says that Wilson 'relies' for 'much of his material' upon the Peel Commission Report of 1937.'⁴⁶¹ There are a number of notable factors which suggest why Wilson refers so frequently to the 1937 report: for example, it contained an in-depth account of ancient biblical and religious history of the Jewish people, which firmly establishes their protracted identity with Palestine - the 'Land of Israel'; secondly, and perhaps most importantly in terms of both contemporary and modern political reasons, the Report advocated the partitioning of mandate Palestine into 'Jewish' (Zionist) and 'Arab' (Palestinian) states, thereby achieving the central aim of political Zionism - a Jewish State in Palestine, a decade before the partition of the country was actually adopted by the United Nations in 1947. Wilson claims the 1937 Report presented an ideal opportunity to resolve the Palestinian-political Zionism question, which he says was regrettably not taken:

'As we have seen, the ultimate solution for Palestine did involve partition. Had this been accepted from the start Britain [and the Labour government] need not have gone thorough the agonies of 1945-7. But not only was Bevin violently opposed to the concept until it was forced upon him, but it became clear that the British Mandate itself was not compatible with a partition solution.'⁴⁶²

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., (1981: 34)

⁴⁶¹ Lytle, Mark Hamilton (1983: 121) *quoting*, Harold Wilson, (1982) *The Chariot of Israel: Britain, America and the State of Israel*, Political Science Quarterly, Book Reviews, Vol. 98, Issue No. 1, pp.120-121

⁴⁶² Wilson, Harold (1981: 44)

That withstanding, in terms of securing an understanding of how the thinking and development of British and Labour policies contributed to the establishment of Israel (Wilson's stated purpose of the book), as Lytle states, 'Scholars looking to Wilson for insight into British policy are likely to be disappointed.'⁴⁶³ Whatever the origins and *basis* of Wilson's pro-political Zionism, as Labour Leader and Prime Minister the influence and demands of the wider party and crucially British national and strategic interests were also a defining factor in shaping Wilson and Labour's position towards the Israel-Palestinian/Arab conflict from 1963 to 1980.

Wilson became party leader in 1963, and Labour was elected to government in 1964. With the precariousness of the British economy and its reliance on Middle Eastern oil with trade of paramount importance to Britain's balance of payments and Labour's promised domestic spending agenda, foreign affairs in relation to the Arab/Palestinian-Israel conflict were close to mind from the onset, and became increasingly so as the Middle East slid towards yet another war. As a political economist Wilson was only too aware of the significance of Britain and Labour's position with regards to the Arab-Israel conflict and its potential consequences, notably for curtailing Labour's domestic initiatives promised at the General Election. In the months leading to the June 6, 1967 Six-Day War, Wilson described the situation in the Middle East between Arab states, the Palestinians and Israel, as the 'smouldering crisis' that was beginning to 'reach danger-point.'⁴⁶⁴ Continuing:

'From the spring of 1966 there had been a succession of incidents on Israel's borders, some from the Palestinian refugees in Jordan. Some of these were referred to the Security Council, whose membership was qualitatively and quantitatively unbalanced to the disadvantage of Israel.'⁴⁶⁵

Although by his own admission a firm supporter of Israel, as the situation deteriorated Wilson increasingly came to support the neutrality of the United Nations position as

⁴⁶³ Lytle, Mark Hamilton (1983: 121)

⁴⁶⁴ Wilson, Harold (1971: 394) *The Labour Government 1964-1970: A Personal Record*, Chapter 21, *May-June 1967*, (London: Weidenfeld, Nicolson & Michael Joseph)

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, (1971: 394)

British interests seemed threatened by an escalation of the conflict into open warfare. This position between personal commitment and wider political duty came to be a defining characteristic of Wilson's premiership: he was a pro-Israel figure who was not averse to accepting the need to adopt a pro-British interest position if required, even if that contradicted those of Israel.

The Prelude to War

On the eve of the out-break of the 1967 war, eruptions of a kind were already taking place in terms of debate between Labour figures and the pro-Israel sections of the party. The left-wing intellectual Richard [Dick] Crossman (Leader of the House) narrates the interchange of opinions and positions that took place via the medium of television:

'on tonight's *Panorama* programme where the viewers were shown Christopher Mayhew interviewing Colonel Nasser in the friendliest possible way and Manny Shinwell staging a furious row on behalf of the Israelis. Considering that he [Mayhew], as Minister of War, supported all Ernest Bevin's worst excesses in Palestine it's staggering to listen to speeches he now makes.'⁴⁶⁶

Crossman continues:

'But it was nice to put the record straight with [Aharon] Remez [Israeli Ambassador to Britain], especially as I did so in the presence of John Silkin [Labour Chief Whip 1966-1969], who of course is a Jew and at this moment a fanatical pro-Israeli. It's interesting because his father is completely anti-Zionist and has brought up his sons without any Jewish religion or Jewish sense of nationhood as pukka Englishmen.'⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁶ Crossman, Richard (1976: 364-365) *The Dairies of a Cabinet Minister*, Volume II, *Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons 1966-68*, Monday June 5, 1967, (London: Hamish Hamilton & Jonathan)

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, (1976: 364-365)

In addition to those more public spats there were equally volatile differences of opinion within the Cabinet. As again Richard Crossman recounts:

‘At our weekly meeting with Burke [Sir Burke Trend, Cabinet Secretary] and the P.M. I noted that Harold was trying to avoid talking to me about a number of awkward topics I wanted to raise. One of them was George Brown’s refusal to let me be the Minister representing us in Israel at the Balfour Declaration celebrations on November 4th, 1967. I’d sent Harold a memorandum describing what had happened about this invitation. The Israeli Foreign Office had invited the P.M. to attend and said that if he couldn’t go they wanted me.

Harold had passed this letter to George and the Foreign Office had quickly got in a proposal that Ted Short should be the man. I said this was very tart because they had asked specifically for me. George then minuted me that he objected very strongly to a speech I had made to a Zionist organisation in London. To this I replied by letter asking him to send the text of the offending passage. To this I got the following reply:

I should like you to understand my principal objection is not the reports of what you are alleged to have said, though from the point of view of Arab reaction it doesn’t much matter whether they are accurate or not. The real trouble is that the presence of a Cabinet Minister of your seniority would make difficulties for us in the Arab world. Goodness knows, we have enough of these already.’⁴⁶⁸

In response Crossman wrote to Wilson:

‘I am sorry to worry you with this but the attached minutes from the Foreign Secretary compels me to do so. He states he cannot permit me or any other senior Minister to celebrate the Balfour Declaration in Israel for fear or repercussions in the Arab world. If this is true that our relations with the Arabs depend on appeasing them to this extent the situation is depressing indeed

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., (1976: 281) *Friday March 17, 1967*

since I doubt whether in the worst days of the Bevin regime it was as bad as that. But frankly I believe the Foreign Secretary is doing himself and his Department an injustice by suggesting that our relations with Israel have to be conducted within these extra-ordinary narrow confines in order to sustain our Arab policy. Perhaps we could have a word about it?'⁴⁶⁹

Wilson's reply to Crossman - via his Private Secretary Marcia Williams⁴⁷⁰ - was as follows:

'He [Harold Wilson] feels you should sort this out with George or raise it at Cabinet.'⁴⁷¹

Crossman stated in a conclusion to Wilson's reply:

'But I didn't. I realised that if I wanted to stay in Government I'd got to accept it.'^{472 473}

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., (1976: 282) *Friday March 17, 1967*

⁴⁷⁰ Marcia Williams' influence is claimed to have extended to the appointments from the Foreign Office staff to Wilson's Private Office Team, as in the case of Oliver Wright in 1974. As Kavanagh and Seldon state: 'Wright's appointment was almost strangled at birth by the Political Secretary, Marcia Williams. He had already established himself as an outstanding young diplomat destined to go to the top of the FCO . . . But he was also an Arabist; Mrs Williams was a staunch pro-Israeli . . . a rearguard action had then to be fought to preserve his appointment when his credentials became known to Mrs Williams. She often attempted to get favoured Israelis into Number Ten over the heads of the Private Office, but Wilson, while happy to see large numbers of Israelis, had become increasingly wary of seeing those she was promoting.' Kavanagh, Dennis & Seldon, Anthony (1999: 114) *The Powers Behind the Prime Minister: The Hidden Influence of Number Ten*, Chapter 4, *Harold Wilson (1974-76)*, (London: Harper Collins)

⁴⁷¹ Crossman, Richard (1976: 282) *Friday March 17, 1967*

⁴⁷² Ibid., (1976: 282)

⁴⁷³ As Richard Crossman says, as is custom, Harold Wilson may have considered divergent opinions, 'But even though he is balancing forces in the Cabinet rather than ordering them, he has, in my view, tremendous power - something which any Cabinet Minister is aware of every

The exchange between Crossman, Brown and Wilson is evidence of the divergence of very often firmly held and defended views and positions within the Cabinet on this issue. But as Crossman also concludes, despite these differences of opinion, a Cabinet consensus must eventually be determined in order to arrive at a policy. In this case, reality was such that ultimately British national and strategic interests - irrefutably tied to Middle Eastern Arab oil reserves - took priority in terms of the Cabinet (party) consensus and policy position over the more pro-Israel position derived from individual and tradition Labour-political Zionist relations. As the academic, Jonathan Spyer notes:

‘[Harold Wilson] among the most pro-Israeli of British politicians’ could not always determine the decision of Cabinet.’⁴⁷⁴

The Cabinet consensus throughout the 1967 war and its aftermath was that British interests were paramount and that the various pro-positions regarding the Arab/Palestinian-Israel conflict also had to be placed within the context of international law and the United Nations. This consensus was undoubtedly in part the product of Wilson’s Foreign Secretaries, Patrick Gordon Walker (October 1964-January 1965), Michael Stewart (Jan 1965-Aug 1966 / Mar 1968-Jun 1970)⁴⁷⁵ and

day of his life. I am aware I am there at the Prime Minister’s discretion. The Prime Minister can withdraw that discretion on any day he likes without stating a reason.’ (Crossman, Richard (1972: 63) *Inside View: Three Lectures on Prime Ministerial Government*, Lecture 2, *Decision-taking in Number 10 and Whitehall*, (London: Jonathan Cape)

⁴⁷⁴ Spyer, Jonathan *An Analytical and Historical Overview of British Policy towards Israel*, Middle East Review of International Affairs, Vol. 8, Issue No. 2, June 2004, pp.10

⁴⁷⁵ Michael Stewart (b.1906-d.1990) MP: (Fulham East, 1945-1955), (Fulham, 1955-1979) went on to become Foreign Secretary twice under Harold Wilson. Stewart served in Palestine in WWII and unusually for Labour revered the Foreign Secretary post, stating, ‘the politician who will refuse the Foreign Office is not yet born.’ Stewart, Michael (1980: 138) *Life and Labour: An Autobiography*, (London: Sidgwick & Jackson). Stewart’s positions on the Arab-Israel conflict were relatively clear as he states: ‘In the last resort my sympathies were with Israel.’ Stewart, Michael (1980: 212). Although from the vantage point of 1980 he stated after the 1967 war: ‘Nor, I think, did Israel take sufficient account of the complaints of the Arab

George Brown (August 1966 - March 1968). All three had interesting and relevant knowledge and experience of the Middle East and Arab-Israel conflict.

Wilson's first Foreign Secretary, Patrick Gordon Walker, had personal experience of the Nazi genocide. He had visited Belsen shortly after its liberation, a visit that was to leave a profound, life-long impression upon him as a poignant quote from his diaries - chosen by his editor Robert Pearce - captures the memories and images:

'Gordon Walker believed that the concentration camp "is one of the exclusive characteristics and manifestations of our age. It is one of the distinguishing marks of the twentieth century." The only historical parallel he could think of was the slave ships. "They too had violin players to keep the cargo quiet."⁴⁷⁶

Gordon Walker had also gained a relatively early experience of the Palestinian and Arab dimensions to the conflict with Israel. While Labour was in opposition he had undertaken a visit to the Middle East (27 December 1953 - 21 January 1954) as part of a parliamentary delegation; the visit included the Jordanian-administered West Bank. In his diary entry records Gordon Walker describes the plight of some '30,000' Palestinian refugees at *Aquabat Jabr* camp and their dire predicament:

'The mud huts are well built and clean. Deaths are concealed in order to keep up ration claims. Two doctors and six nurses do admirable work in a shed-

people brought under her rule by the outcome of the Six Day War, and it may be this neglect that has made the claims of the Palestinians so much more extensive and violent today than they were in the 1960s. On lesser, but important issues, Israel put herself in the wrong; on the great issue of her statehood and security she was overwhelmingly in the right.' Stewart, Michael (1980: 212-213)

⁴⁷⁶ Pearce, Robert [Editor] (1991: 15-16) *Patrick Gordon Walker: Political Diaries*, quoting, Patrick Gordon Walker, *The Lid Lifts*, (1945), (London: Victor Gollancz), (London: The Historians) See: Pearce, Robert (1991: 134-161) Chapter 5, *Belsen Concentration Camp, 1945, 17-23 April*

clinic. Most of the disease is due to under-nourishment. Children who are ill are given supplementary rations.⁴⁷⁷

Gordon Walker had also been made aware of how the Palestinian's perceived their position politically, and who they viewed as primarily to blame for their status as refugees - successive British governments, and in particular those of Labour. Gordon Walker learnt that far from being manipulated by their Arab hosts - a claim persistently made by Israel, - the Palestinians themselves had chosen to remain refugees in Jordan as a deliberate policy to avoid being assimilated into the neighbouring Arab states in order to preserve their distinct Palestinian Arab identity and thereby prevent their claim to Palestine from being negated.

As an experienced Cabinet Minister, Gordon Walker provides insight into the workings of government in decision and policy-making. He describes the theoretical and actual realities that stem from the role of the party leader and Prime Minister, the Cabinet, and the backbenchers of the party in the context of foreign affairs, and in particular the Arab-Israel situation in the period leading to the 1967 war:

'The truth is that the Cabinet and the Party inside and outside Parliament do indeed find the Prime Minister an indispensable asset and that this gives him eminent power. But equally the Prime Minister cannot dispense with Party, Parliament and Cabinet. Occasionally a great matter of policy may be dealt with by a partial Cabinet: but the normal, regular and natural procedure is for the Cabinet to discuss and decide all great issues and emergencies - such as the Arab-Israel war. [In order to attain a consensus prior to policy]

On all such matters the Prime Minister's views will carry great weight with members of the Cabinet; but he cannot, like an American President, ignore

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., (1991: 117) *quoting*, Patrick Gordon Walker, Chapter 7, 5-6 January 1954, *In Opposition, 1952-55: Party Strife and Commonwealth Affairs*

their views. The Prime Minister can exercise his greatly enhanced powers only if he carries his Cabinet with him.’⁴⁷⁸

The relatively even-handed Gordon Walker was to be replaced as Foreign Minister by George Brown. Brown was in many ways a unique figure in terms of Labour-political Zionist/Israel relations. Having become interested in the Middle East shortly after Labour lost office in 1951, Brown answers a self-imposed question as to the origins and reasoning behind his interest in his memoirs:

‘What first prompted me to become deeply interested in the problems of the Middle East I do not know? It is a question I have often asked myself, and for all my probing I cannot wholly answer it. Some part, unquestionably, is due to my feeling for British interests in the area, and the impact of those interests of events in the Arab world. Some part is certainly due to my oddly inherited Irish background, which made me an anti-imperialist and gave me sympathy for other people who were trying to throw off the yoke of imperialism - sympathy and, I hope, understanding of the dangers of throwing out the ox with the yoke.’⁴⁷⁹

George Brown was a deeply religious man. The ‘Church’ he wrote, is a ‘major influence in my life. Faith gives you a basis for living for tomorrow as well as for today.’⁴⁸⁰ Religious faith also provided the basis and meaning to his socialist ideological beliefs:

‘I got - and get - a deep satisfaction from the beautiful ritual of the Church. I learned to be a good catholic - *not* a Roman Catholic, but a catholic in the true and original sense of belonging to ‘one catholic and apostolic church. I had long discussions with Father Sankey, about God, about people, about social

⁴⁷⁸ Walker, Patrick Gordon (1970: 96) *The Cabinet*, Part Two, Chapter 5, *Evolution of the Cabinet, Role of the Prime Minister*, (London: Cape)

⁴⁷⁹ Brown, George (1971: 227) *In My Way: The Political Memoirs of Lord George Brown*, Chapter 12, *Reflections on the Middle East*, (London: Book Club Associates)

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid., (1971: 29-30) Chapter 1, *Political Apprenticeship*

justice. That gives you, I suppose, what is called a conscience. It teaches you how important the Sacrament is.’⁴⁸¹

Brown’s induction to the Palestinian perspective of the Arab/Palestinian-Israel conflict occurred relatively early in his career while on a visit to the Middle East in December 1951. It was initiated by a relationship with Emile Bustani (a Lebanese Christian business tycoon whose family originated from Palestine). The Labour MP Mont Follick⁴⁸² had suggested Bustani approach Brown with a view to advancing the Palestinian/Arab perspective within the Labour Party via a delegation that Brown might agree to facilitate. Bustani and the visit evidently made an impression on Brown:

‘He [Bustani] was a member of the Lebanese Parliament and organised all sorts of political events. He was also a genuine idealist with vivid idea on how the Middle East could be made peaceful. Although he was a patriotic Arab, he was no anti-Jew. His concern when I first met him was that the people in the West should have some real understanding of the fact that there *was* an Arab case in the Middle East. He felt that there was general Western knowledge of Israel’s case and of Israel’s sufferings, but little conception of the Arab case and of Arab sufferings. It was this that had prompted him to invite us as British M.P.s to visit the area.’⁴⁸³

Accompanied by Bustani, Brown made his first visit to the Jordanian-administered West Bank and East Jerusalem in early January 1952. The political, cultural and religious significance of the Holy Land and the Christian festive season touched Brown profoundly. His account has a remarkable echoing resemblance to the earlier writings of MacDonald, Snell and Morrison in the 1920s and 1930s:⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., (1971: 30)

⁴⁸² Mont Follick (b.1887-d.1958) MP: (Loughborough, 1945-1955)

⁴⁸³ Brown, George (1971: 228) Chapter 12, *Reflections on the Middle East*

⁴⁸⁴ See: Chapter 1, MacDonald, Ramsay (1922: 9) *A Socialist in Palestine*, and, Snell, Henry (1938: 243) Chapter XV, *Work in Parliament*.

‘The chance of visiting Bethlehem on Christmas Eve was too great an opportunity to be missed. I suddenly woke up to one of the most wonderful sights I’ve ever seen. It was a frosty, bright moonlit night, and the fearsome road was tooled on the edge of a mountainside. In the light of an enormous moon we passed a string of donkeys and camels, and suddenly, right ahead in the cold, clear night I saw a huge star blazing in the sky. ‘There’, said Bustani, ‘is Bethlehem’ - and there was the star.’⁴⁸⁵

All my knowledge of the Bible scenes then came from picture books, and this was a picture book scene. Surely it was [Brown’s emphasis] the first Christmas Eve.’⁴⁸⁶

Brown’s account adequately projects the deep significance of the *related religious philosophies* aspect of the *basis* and *nature* of relations. He was not, however, unreceptive to the progressive aspects of political Zionism and the State of Israel. In another memoir extract Brown says of the achievements of Israel during his first visit in 1955:

‘I made an extensive tour of Israel and saw the wonderful things that the Israelis were doing then, and are doing still, to reclaim the desert and to increase the fertility of the country.’⁴⁸⁷

From 1951 onwards, Brown’s interest, knowledge and contacts in the Middle East burgeoned. By 1955 he was considered by the Labour Leader Hugh Gaitskell (1955-1963) to be a ‘raging Arab,’⁴⁸⁸ conversely, Brown considered Gaitskell to be a ‘passionate pro-Zionist, having married into a prominent Zionist family.’⁴⁸⁹ Gaitskell’s opinion of Brown was in part based on his increasingly frequent visits to

⁴⁸⁵ George Brown does record that ‘the star’ as it transpired, was in fact a neon sign to a hotel.

⁴⁸⁶ Brown, George (1971: 229-230)

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., (1971: 232)

⁴⁸⁸ Wilson, Harold (1981: 248)

⁴⁸⁹ Brown, George (1971: 231). Hugh Gaitskell married Anna Dora Gaitskell (Baroness Gaitskell, 1964) (b.1901-d.1989) a Labour politician and delegate to the United Nations.

the Middle East and the development of close contacts with the Arab states and their leaders. These trips and contacts were initially undertaken following Labour's 1951 election defeat, but continued after Brown and Labour's return to government in 1964 and naturally accelerated after his appointment as Foreign Secretary in 1966. Brown recognized the impact these visits were having on his profile within the party and the leadership:

‘After a number of visits to the Middle East some people in the Labour Party began to feel that I was in danger of becoming too involved with the Arab case. Hugh Gaitskell was among them. He never tried to discourage me from visiting Arab countries, . . . No pressure was ever put on me to desert my Arab friends, but efforts were made to enable me to meet Israeli leaders.’⁴⁹⁰

Whatever Gaitskell and Wilson's views of Brown, or the opinions of the pro-Israel figures, his appointment as Foreign Secretary in August 1966 reflected the fact that the party leadership saw good use for his pro-Arab position on the Middle East at a crucial point in time. Unlike some other Labour Foreign Secretaries - notably his former boss and mentor, Ernest Bevin - Brown had coveted the post.⁴⁹¹ He had a genuinely passionate interest in foreign affairs and, as the political quagmire of Israel-Arab/Palestinian affairs progressively brewed into a storm, Brown was largely insulated from potential accusations of anti-Semitism, as he recounts:

‘Although married into a Jewish family, and on terms of intimate friendship with many Arabs, I never took on either a Zionist or an Arab colouring. I had

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., (1971: 30)

⁴⁹¹ One reason Labour figures did not relish the post of Foreign Secretary was the isolating nature of the position. As Mackintosh claims: ‘The Foreign Secretary stands in a rather special relationship to both the Prime Minister and the rest of the Cabinet. With the Cabinet, the position is fairly constant. The Foreign Secretary is expected to conduct day-to-day business on his [her] own (or with the aid of the Prime Minister) keeping his Cabinet informed of the general lines of policy.’ Mackintosh, John P. (1962: 396) *The British Cabinet*, Chapter 13, *The Modern Cabinet, Senior Cabinet Ministers, The Foreign Secretary*, (London: Stevens & Sons)

in fact opposed the establishment of a Zionist state of Israel in the early days because I was then close to Bevin and saw things through his eyes. But that didn't make me anti-Israeli. The state of Israel having been established, it seemed to me crystal-clear that the state would have to live. My Arab friends never expected me to take a different position.'⁴⁹²

Labour's Response to the Six-Day War

As a response to growing tensions with Israel and under pressure from his Arab allies, on May 18th, 1967, President Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt requested a withdrawal of 3,400 U.N. troops from the Gaza Strip, Sharm el Sheikh, and the Israel-Egypt border. The next day U. Thant (U.N. Secretary General) ordered the implementation of Nasser's request.

In a statement on May 24th, 1967, Harold Wilson repeated the British government's policy position of regarding the Straits of Tiran as an international waterway which Nasser claimed as territorial water and threatened to close, and that if necessary the British government would support international action to ensure free navigation in the area, including that of Israel. To this end Wilson had sought from all maritime nations a declaration affirming the Gulf of Aqaba was an international waterway and was accordingly to be defended as such. Before this was finalised, however, Nasser closed the Straits of Tiran on June 5th to Israeli shipping precipitating a pre-emptive Israeli attack, during which Israel decisively defeated the Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian armed forces and occupied the West Bank, Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, the Syrian Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula.

Although Britain declared its neutrality from the onset of the Six-Day War, calling for an immediate ceasefire, Nasser accused Britain (and the U.S.A.) of aiding Israel. As a result Nasser persuaded two of the largest oil producing states (Iraq and Kuwait) to suspend oil supplies to Britain, a position that became a comprehensive Arab oil embargo until September 1967. The British position was in fact a convenient compromise between Wilson's ardent pro-political Zionism and Brown's understanding of the Arab position; it was a compromise which allowed British

⁴⁹² Brown, George (1971: 229)

national interests to be protected whilst allowing the party to avoid, once again, the realities of the *essential dilemma*.

It is a general view that George Brown excelled as Foreign Secretary during the 1967 war. Whatever his previous 'colourings', in government he was prepared to firmly criticise the Arabs, the Palestinians and Israel, while attempting to remain securely behind Labour and the UN neutrality policy position. As Wilson says of him:

'George had never joined the majority in the Labour leadership which supported Israel, but in the Cabinet meetings during the crisis days of May and June 1967 he never wavered, and indeed journeyed to Moscow and Washington to make his weight felt against Arab aggression.'⁴⁹³

Labour's neutrality position was essentially based on UN resolutions. Although Brown was seen as a pro-Arab figure, on the basis of the illegal act undertaken by Nasser in blockading the Tiran Straits, the Labour Foreign Secretary had sought Wilson's approval to engage British forces in defence of international law and British interests. In the event, Wilson convinced Brown that the Cabinet, particularly Roy Jenkins, Barbara Castle and James Callaghan, would strongly oppose such a decision, and Brown backed down.⁴⁹⁴ Nonetheless, Brown's bullishness was pleasing, and not a little surprising, to Israel's friends in the Cabinet. The arch-Zionist Richard [Dick] Crossman was especially complimentary of Brown's conduct during the 1967 war:

'George Brown's daily statements in the House were better and better each day. His line was that whatever our personal sympathies Britain must remain neutral and be seen to make peace between the two sides.

⁴⁹³ Wilson, Harold (1981: 332)

⁴⁹⁴ Pearce, Robert (1991: 316) *quoting*, Patrick Gordon Walker, Chapter 9, 24 June 1967, *The Wilson Years, 1963-71: In and Out of Office*

By now, of course, the pro-Israel feeling in the country is absolutely overwhelming and there is a great sense of triumph and victory. No one worried about the Israeli pre-emptive strike being an act of aggression.’⁴⁹⁵

Prior to the 1967 war, Labour’s wider Middle Eastern policy had somewhat ironically been based on a pro-Nasser strategy. The advent of war had shattered that basis. The pro-Nasser policy had arisen in the wake of Labour’s pro-United Nations position which was critical of Israel, during the 1956 Suez Crisis when - as opponents of Conservative government policy - Labour developed relations with Nasser in the belief that the party had some influence upon the Egyptian leader. It was agreed however, by both George Brown and Harold Wilson that this policy had been the first casualty of the advent of war in 1967 as Labour’s pro-United Nations policy was viewed as anti-Arab by Nasser. As Crossman says:

‘It also looks as if the whole of George Brown’s pro-Nasser policy, on which he’s been spending weeks and months, has collapsed overnight. Instead George and Harold have suddenly done a complete volte-face and are now wholly pro-Israel, seeking to persuade the Americans that we and they must send ships to call Nasser’s bluff and break the blockade without the Israeli’s having to make war.’⁴⁹⁶

Nonetheless, within a very short period of the war ending, Labour’s perceived pro-Israel policy - based on support for UN resolutions - began to shift as Labour figures came to realise that Israel had little or no intention of using the acquisition of vast Arab territories to secure a peace agreement, especially if it included a resolution to the Israel-Palestinian dimension. George Brown was among the first to recognise this Israeli position, and identify and convey its likely consequences. As he states that it was the capture and ‘now annexed *de facto* if not formally’ by Israel of ‘large new areas of Arab land’⁴⁹⁷ that led him to conclude what was for him and many others, an unacceptable position by Israel:

⁴⁹⁵ Crossman, Richard (1976: 370) *Thursday June 8, 1967*

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid., (1976: 355) *Monday May 29, 1967*

⁴⁹⁷ Brown, George (1971: 233)

‘It was clear that what Israel, or at least many of her leaders, really wanted was permanently to colonise much of this newly annexed territory, particularly . . . Jerusalem and other sensitive areas.’⁴⁹⁸

Brown’s early recognition of Israel’s intentions to retain and colonise Arab lands captured in 1967 and his consternation at Israel’s refusal to negotiate or relinquish what the UN came to categorise as the ‘Occupied Territories’, led to what many view as his finest political hour.

It was as the joint-author of UN Resolution, 242, along with Lord Caradon [Hugh Foot] (British Minister to the United Nations and brother of Michael Foot) for which Brown is best remembered as he affirmed his credentials as a skilful diplomat with an informed touch for the complexities of the Middle East. Lord Caradon and the United Nations had reached an impasse in the Arab-Israel negotiations. Brown explains what he and Foot combined efforts eventually produced:

‘We took over the drafting of this resolution when pretty well everybody else had failed. This resolution set out in a carefully balanced way what Israelis and the Arabs would have to do to secure both peace in the Middle East and recognition of the State of Israel. I have been pressed many times to spell out exactly what the resolution meant, but I’ve always refused to go farther than what it says. It declares “the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war” and it also affirms the necessity “for guaranteeing the territorial inviolability and political independence of every State in the area”. It calls for “withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict” and also for “termination of all claims or states of belligerency.”’⁴⁹⁹

Brown continues:

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., (1971: 233)

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid., (1971: 233)

‘It does *not* call for Israeli withdrawal from ‘the’ territories recently occupied, nor does it use the word ‘all.’ It would have been impossible to get the resolution through if either of these words had been included, but it does set out the lines on which negotiations for a settlement must take place.’⁵⁰⁰

With Wilson’s approval, Brown and Caradon had established that whatever the pro-Arab or pro-Israel positions of individuals or sections within the Cabinet or party, Labour’s policy position in times of conflict and threats to British interests were to support the United Nations. This was in line with Labour’s Constitutional position to support international organs, and it also released the party from the constraints imposed by the ideological contradiction posed by *common origins* and the *essential dilemma*, in that if Labour fell behind the UN and international law, neither Israel or the Arab states could direct too much criticism at individuals or the party.

Labour’s new even-handedness towards the ‘Arab-Israel problem’ did not, of course, reflect the expectations of some senior Israeli Labor figures. Although Brown had cordial meetings with senior Israeli politicians (notably Golda Meir and Abba Eban), others were not so hospitable towards Brown’s search for a resolution to the conflict. As Brown says:

‘I had talks with most of the leading politicians in Israel except [David] Ben-Gurion. He was one of the few political leaders in the whole world who have declined to meet me. He had been briefed, I suppose, about my [U.N.] activities and had misunderstood them, and perhaps he had been reminded of my admiration for Bevin.’^{501 502}

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., (1971: 233)

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., (1971: 232)

⁵⁰² Ben-Gurion’s failure to meet Brown was likely to have resulted from Brown’s well-publicised contacts with Arab states and the Palestinian Emile Bustani in particular; it is likely that Ben-Gurion was attempting to create a political distraction from Brown’s efforts to bring Israel to negotiate on the Occupied Territories.

Even those Israeli politicians who agreed to meet with Brown were not always receptive to the idea of a negotiated settlement. As one Israeli Cabinet figure said in a direct meeting with Brown:

‘It’s nice to see you here, it’s nice of you to take the trouble to come, it’s nice of you to be interested in our problems, but I wish to God you’d go away George.’⁵⁰³

It was not only Israeli figures who rejected Labour’s neutrality policy position. For example, although the general consensus within the party remained pro-Israel, there were a few pro-Arab figures who expressed their opinions and positions in Parliament. David Watkins recollects a speech in the House of Commons by William [Will] Griffiths⁵⁰⁴ before the commencement of the 1967 hostilities. Watkins’ claims the speech became a ‘landmark in changing Labour attitudes’⁵⁰⁵ since Griffiths acknowledged the threat to British interests, but he also underlined the Palestinian dimension of the conflict, which had hitherto remained cloaked in the wider Arab-Israel struggle:

‘Will Griffiths was a respected senior backbencher who, like T.S.B. Williams in the generation before him, had served in the army in the Middle East. He had been at the battle of El Alamein [Egypt], one of the decisive turning points of the Second World War and he knew the region well. Shortly before the debate, he had visited Egypt. Called to speak in the later part of the debate, he pointed out that every speech so far, on both sides of the House, had put only one point of view, the Israeli one. There was another side to the question and he intended to put it.’⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰³ Brown, George (1971: 238) *quoting*, Ezer Weizman (Likud, former Head of the Israeli military, IDF Deputy Chief-of-Staff)

⁵⁰⁴ William Griffiths (b.1912-d.1973) MP: (Moss Side, 1945-1950), (Manchester Exchange, 1950-1973)

⁵⁰⁵ Watkins, David (1996: 114)

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, (1996: 114) *referring to*, William Griffiths, Hansard, May 31, 1967, cols, 142-153

Watkins describes the response of the pro-Israel section of Labour to the attempt by Griffiths to present a different perspective on the conflict:

‘At once, he became subject to constant barracking. Hansard recorded that he gave way to seven interventions and the word ‘Interruption’ was inserted into his speech no fewer than 23 times.

Those of us who were there recall that those interruptions were largely comprised of attempts to shout him down and prevent him being heard, more of them coming from our own party than from the other side. He was not the man to be intimidated and he completed his speech. In terms of its consequences that was probably the most effective speech he ever made, for, together with disgust over the fascist-like reaction of the Israeli lobby, it set a new generation of Labour MPs - those who had entered the House at the 1964 and 1966 election - thinking about the Middle East, in some cases rethinking and others, myself included, thinking about it seriously for the first time.’⁵⁰⁷

What Watkins has actually identified and described was the beginnings of what became the deviation process, as Labour figures, increasingly aware of the Palestinian perspective, came to question Labour’s traditional and often unquestioning support for political Zionism and Israel. The deviation process which began tentatively in 1956 would eventually erode the pro-Israel consensus in Labour, gradually re-directing the party to adopt a more even-handed consensus and policy position in 1994. In his opinion, this developed with the realisation by a few Labour figures that there was an ‘Arab’ [and Palestinian] perspective to the Israel-Arab conflict. This awareness also came as a result of the new demographic and parliamentary generational changes which occurred in the mid-1960s with the intake of new Labour MPs after the 1964, 1966 and 1970 general elections, along with the decline in the numbers of the pro-political Zionist post-Holocaust generation of MPs - of whom a number were Jewish.

Christopher Mayhew supports Watkins’ assessment, but also indicates how far some Labour figures had to develop in convincing their fellow Labour colleagues to amend

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid., (1996: 114)

their pro-political Zionist stance. After being introduced to the subject in all ignorance in 1945 Mayhew had eventually become a pro-Arab/Palestinian figure by 1963, and describes the reaction and consequences for some Labour figures who undertook to convey the Palestinian perspective - or even Arab/Palestinian side - in Parliament and elsewhere:

‘It is hard to convey today [1987] the bitterness with which friends of the Palestinians were assailed at that time [c.post-1967] by their Zionist opponents. The dedication of almost all Jewish people to Israel was then intense and unquestioning [Holocaust legacy], and this led them to assume that her critics must be either mad or bad; they must be anti-Semites, . . . Friends of the Palestinians often had difficulty in making themselves heard.’⁵⁰⁸

Mayhew explains further how this difficulty extended to his broader efforts to explain his position via the expanding medium of television, and the awkward consequences it could create:

‘I had many opportunities at this time to state my views on radio and television. I took what would be considered now a neutral line, criticizing both Israel and the Arabs, arguing that Britain should not intervene militarily except as a member of the UN, demanding justice for the [Palestinian] refugees but insisting that Israel had a right to live in peace with her own frontiers.

Nevertheless, the climate of opinion was so fiercely and uncritically pro-Israeli that pressure soon built up among the pro-Israelis to get me off the air. A “round robin”, signed by twenty-six of my fellow Labour MPs, was sent to Mr John Silkin, the Chief Government Whip. Mr Silkin, a strong supporter of Israel, publicly declared his official approval for the petition and forwarded it to the BBC.’⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁸ Mayhew, Christopher (1987: 159) *Chapter 13, Supporting the Palestinians*

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid., (1987: 159)

For the most part, and despite the developing deviation process, in some corners of the party, Labour figures remained resolutely uncritical of Israel.

1967-1973: The Arms Sales debate in the lead-up to 1973 October War

Labour Party policy towards Israel and the Palestine question was dominated in the years following the 1967 war by the issue of arms sales to Israel. Although the leadership was deeply aware of the consequences of contributing to the regional arms race at a time of sustained border tensions between Israel and Egypt, and not least the animosity it would create among oil-supplying Arab allies, the arms industry remained a key active player in the British exports to the Middle East.

In 1969, and against Foreign Office advice, the Cabinet decided to secretly supply Israel with Chieftain tanks. As Richard Crossman stated: 'Starting in 1970/1 Chieftains will be sold, with secrecy maintained up to that point, and it will pay the Israelis to keep it secret.'⁵¹⁰ A year later (1969), the issue was raised again when two Cabinet colleagues, Michael Stewart (Foreign Secretary) and Denis Healey (Defence Secretary), produced a paper recommending that the sales be delayed. Crossman recounts the response:

'Negotiations had started months ago and it was suggested that we should hold them up at least until September and send out a delaying communiqué. Michael was saying for the Foreign Office that otherwise we would suffer appalling losses if the Arabs discovered what we are doing. I don't know what Denis Healey really thinks; he was saying that this would shift the balance of power in the Middle East and that if the Israelis knew we were cancelling support for them the effect might be to start the war earlier. Fred Peart⁵¹¹ said

⁵¹⁰ Crossman, Richard (1977: 255) *The Dairies of a Cabinet Minister*, Volume III, *Secretary of State for Social Services, Tuesday November 12th, 1968*, (London: Hamish Hamilton & Jonathan Cape)

⁵¹¹ Thomas Frederick [Fred] Peart [Baron Peart, 1976] (b.1914-d.1988) MP: (Workington, 1945-1976); Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House, 1968-1970), Crossman describes Peart - and himself - as 'fairly solid Israeli men' Crossman (1977: 251) *Thursday November 7, 1968*

we ought to supply the arms to Israel anyway and Tony [Anthony] Crosland for the Board of Trade said that we really must be sensible and not supply them. Barbara Castle wanted to be honest with the Israelis and Callaghan in rather a muddled way said the same thing.’⁵¹²

Roy Jenkins took the part of the Board of Trade; arms sales would be good for Britain, while those more influenced by the arguments of the Foreign Office remained deeply opposed. With sharp differences in the Cabinet, British national interests prevailed - arms sales would proceed to both sides - despite the awareness of the potential Arab (economic) response. Again, as Crossman conveys:

‘George Brown had apparently given an explicit assurance that we wouldn’t let the Israelis down, even though he had been warned about pressure from the Arabs. The Ministry of Defence had shown itself quite enthusiastic about the sale, which wasn’t in any case to take place until 1972 or 1973. It was only quite recently, in the last six months, that the Arabs began to twig that we were about to do this and they have been working up tremendous propaganda against the sale.’⁵¹³

However, despite the decision, Michael Stewart’s conclusion is indelibly telling: ‘We were trying to get the best of both worlds, to placate the Arabs by postponing the decision and keep the Israelis tagging along.’⁵¹⁴ The cynicism of the final decision was evident in the decision to ‘compensate’ the Arabs for the arms sales to Israel with arms sales for themselves. As Crossman explains:

‘Roy Mason is fanatically in favour of as much trade as possible and of our unloading £500 million-worth of the most modern kind of armaments on these poor Arabs, which is perfectly safe because they are not fit to use them. It was

⁵¹² Crossman, Richard (1977: 467) *Thursday May 1, 1969*

⁵¹³ *Ibid.*, (1977: 513) *Wednesday June 11, 1969*

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*, (1977: 514)

the most ignominious and terrible example of a real old-fashioned Foreign Policy, combined with a cynical merchant of death arms sales policy.’⁵¹⁵

For the Israelis, Labour’s duplicity and cynicism was at best, deeply disappointing, and at its worst, venomous. Israeli Ambassador Remez informed Richard Crossman that the response of Golda Meir (Israeli Labor Prime Minister) to Labour’s position was thus:

‘I don’t want to set foot in a country where there is a Labour Government whose name is synonymous with treachery?’⁵¹⁶

For much of the period preceding 1973, therefore, and despite the traditional pro-political Zionist positions of the Labour leadership, relations between the party and Israel were, and remained, troubled. The supply of Middle Eastern oil and the vast spending of the Arab states had proved to be a powerful force upon Labour’s policy position, as had radical Arab nationalism; furthermore, if there were any lingering doubts about the waning of influence of Britain in the Middle East the evidence was clear that Britain ‘could no longer project itself as a major force in the world.’⁵¹⁷ Additionally and crucially for the deviation process and the development of the *essential dilemma*, Labour recognised after 1967 that the Palestinian dimension was an unavoidable aspect of the conflict; as the academic Gerard Chaliand noted: ‘the Israeli-Arab conflict has returned to its original dimension, which was first and foremost a struggle between Palestinians and Israeli.’^{518 519}

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., (1977: 685) *Wednesday October 15, 1969*

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., (1977: 737) *Wednesday November 19, 1969*

⁵¹⁷ Dorey, Peter [Editor] (2006: 130) *The Labour Governments 1964-1970*, Chapter 8. Rhiannon Vickers, *Foreign Policy beyond Europe*, (Abingdon: Routledge)

⁵¹⁸ Chaliand, Gerard (1972: 1) *Preface, The Palestinian Resistance*, (Harmondsworth: Pelican)

⁵¹⁹ Whatever Wilson or Labour’s preferred policy, the broader realities of Britain’s position re the Middle East are highlighted by Donald Maclean: ‘Today London’s ability to determine the course of events is very limited, a fact thrown into sharp relief by the gun flash which lit up this part of the world in June 1967. . . . The British government, which only a dozen years

1973: The End of An Era

In October 1973, the Egyptian army breached the Israeli defences along the Bar Lev line on the East Bank of the Suez Canal. In a military attack, coordinated with the Syrians in the Golan Heights, Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat, sought to break the deadlock between his own country and Israel and to re-engage the United States in active diplomacy to resolve their ongoing conflict. The crossing of the Suez Canal by Egyptian forces embroiled the Middle East in the fourth major war in four decades. The involvement of the USA and the USSR had demonstrated the potential for Israeli-Arab affairs to threaten super-power stabilities at the height of the Cold War, while the post-war negotiations saw the use of curtailed oil supplies by the Gulf Arab states as a tactic to derive a settlement of the Arab-Israel dispute.

As an *external determinate*, the 1973 October War was to prove a decisive factor in terms of Labour-Israel *relations*. It had dramatic and irreparable consequences for Labour's pro-Israel position, and thus for Labour's ability to confront the *essential dilemma*. The deviation process that tentatively began in 1956 and increased notably as a result of the 1967 war, accelerated and developed further after 1973 to such an extent that the following decades saw the transformation of the Labour Party consensus from a pro-Israel to a more balanced position in 1994, with a consequent impact on policy.

Apart from the war itself, the major issue that aroused so much disruption in the party arose indirectly from the question of arms supplies. At the out-break of war the Conservative government of Edward Heath announced a neutral policy - reflecting that of the United Nations - in refraining from supplying arms to any combatants. This was bitterly opposed by Labour leader, Harold Wilson, who was deeply perturbed at the Arab attack on Israeli forces. He wrote in response to the assault in his autobiography:

earlier would . . . have been a leading actor, found itself in the wings.' Maclean, Donald (1970: 173) Chapter 5, *The Middle East, Collapse of the Caliphate*

‘THEY WERE AT PRAYER [Wilson’s capital emphasis]. The whole of Israel was at prayer. The most sacred day of the Jewish year, the Day of Atonement.’ The day was sanctified by Holy writ.’^{520 521}

Wilson and his pro-Israel Labour colleagues set out to challenge the Conservative government’s position. Not unreasonably then, Wilson claims that it was ‘Labour that created all the activity’⁵²² in parliamentary debates concerning the October war. While Heath wanted to refrain from supplying arms to either side in the conflict, Wilson asserted that Britain should supply arms only to Israel. Wilson states:

‘As soon as the news of the invasion became known I telephoned the Israeli Ambassador to the Court of St James’s, Michael Comay, and made an immediate appointment to see him and be briefed. Thereafter I was in contact with him each day to hear of the developments.

The first thing he told me was that Mr Heath’s Government had placed an embargo on the shipment of spares and ammunition to Israel needed for the Centurion tanks Britain has supplied when Labour had been in power. As soon as the Prime Minister, Edward Heath, returned to London, I went to No. 10 to press him to change Government policy on spares and ammunition. When he refused, James Callaghan and I took up the issues publicly.’⁵²³

When Edward Heath rejected his arguments, Wilson took the matter to a Commons vote, at which he imposed a three-line whip upon his own party. He was able to do so not least because of the notable pliancy of James Callaghan, then Shadow Foreign

⁵²⁰ Wilson, Harold (1981: 362) *quoting*, *The Holy Bible, Book of Leviticus*, Chapter 23, 26-29, King James Version

⁵²¹ It was also Ramadan, the month of Muslim religious observance; held in the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, commemorating the revealing of the Koran to the Prophet Mohammed via the Arch Angel Gabriel.

⁵²² *Ibid.*, (1981: 365)

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, (1981: 365)

Affairs spokesperson. Wilson said of Callaghan who apparently, did not feel 'as strongly'⁵²⁴ pro-Israel as Wilson himself:

'I was the Leader of the Party . . . I was the boss and he supported my line.'⁵²⁵

As a participating witness to the first significant parliamentary pro-Arab/Palestinian deviations in 1967, initiated by William Griffiths, Labour MP David Watkins gives a sense of the background and atmosphere within the party during the 1973 debate:

'As soon as hostilities started, the Conservative government led by Edward Heath announced a policy of the immediate cessation of arms supplies to both sides, but a raging campaign was being conducted to line Britain up to supply arms to Israel. That apart, British interests were clearly affected and by All-Party agreement, a debate on an adjournment motion was arranged in the Commons. Such a debate is a procedural means to have a full debate without a vote which, given the circumstances, was an eminently sensible way to handle the situation.'⁵²⁶

Watkins' continues:

'However, under the leadership of Harold Wilson and the deputy leadership of Edward Short, an equally committed Zionist, the Parliamentary Labour Party was under powerful pressure to support the supply of arms to Israel. The day before the debate, all Labour Members received a notice from the Chief Whip, Robert Mellish, another committed Zionist, giving notice that subject to a decision of the Shadow Cabinet, a three-line whip might be issued for the debate, meaning three-line whip opposition to the policy of no arms to either side and three-line support for arming Israel. The reaction was electric. More

⁵²⁴ Ibid., (1981: 365)

⁵²⁵ Ibid., (1981: 365)

⁵²⁶ Watkins, David (1996: 118-119)

than 80 members at once made clear that they would not accept the imposition of such a whip.^{527 528}

In the wider Labour and leadership context the largely unthinkable had happened: as 75 Labour MPs abstained, many remaining in their seats throughout the division as a sign of protest, this was the largest Commons Labour Party rebellion relating to the Israel-Palestine question since the debates over partition (1947), the ignominious departure of Britain from Palestine in 1948, and the parliamentary rebellion of 1949 over the British government's recognition of Israel. It was also notable not least because, contrary to the pro-Israel views of the leadership, the wider party sent a clear message in favour of neutrality and international law (UN Resolution, 242) - which is the basis of a more impartial position. The party consensus was evidently diverging among a significant section of the party in favour of this less partial stance and pressing for a consequent change in policy.

Wilson confirms that the Whips were indeed met by 'fierce resistance from the party MPs, particularly from Roy Jenkins';⁵²⁹ Wilson describes how he later went on to bypass some of the disquiet within the party by appealing to MPs on an individual basis. This included Roy Jenkins:

'Look, Roy, I've accommodated your [expletive deleted] conscience for years. Now you're going to have to take account of mine: I feel as strongly about the Middle East [political Zionism and Israel] as you do about the Common Market.'⁵³⁰

⁵²⁷ Ibid., (1996: 118-119)

⁵²⁸ Although the general point concerning the Labour leadership's difficulties in the face of an unprecedented pro-neutralist and pro-Arab/Palestinian rebellion is sound, there appears to be an anomaly in Watkins' account: if the debate on the supply of arms was without a vote, how was it possible to impose a three-line whip? Whips only apply to voting, not attending a debate.

⁵²⁹ Wilson, Harold (1981: 367)

⁵³⁰ Ibid., (1981: 367)

Wilson's pressure yielded only limited results - in this case Jenkins did eventually fall into line.⁵³¹ But as Wilson notes, in the Commons debate some 15 Labour members voted with the Conservative government, as well as the 75 who abstained. In terms of an *internal determinant*, the pro-Israel consensus was clearly on the wane and the leadership was now at odds with a large section of its own party. As Watkins says:

‘In that historic vote on 18 October 1973, 50 years of Zionist domination of Labour attitudes were ended.’⁵³²

For many in the Labour Party the 1973 rebellion represented a ‘major turning point,’⁵³³ the end of an era. Yet the warning signs had been there for some time: arguably at least since 1967, arguably since 1956. The evidence for this shift is primarily located in the adoption by the Labour Party conference of a ‘new statement of policy,’ containing - for the first time - a sentence referring to the failure to resolve the Palestinian question as the root cause of the Middle East conflict, and that their consultation was a essential prerequisite to an search for a peaceful settlement of the issues. With the seismic events instigated by the 1973 war foremost in Labour minds, an important event appears to have gone almost unnoticed by the leadership at least. The statement had originated as a memorandum submitted by the Labour Middle East Council (LMEC) to the National Executive Committee and was almost instantly placed under the scrutiny of the parliamentary party system of lobbying, the party whips and debate:

⁵³¹ Arguably in recognition of the strength and scale of opposition to Wilson's attempts to place Labour behind a pro-Israel position Watkins' notes: ‘The outcome was an extraordinary decision that shadow ministers would vote against the government and that the rest of the party would have a free vote, nothing more than an attempted face-saving device for a hierarchy that knew it was beaten.’ Watkins, David (1996: 119)

⁵³² Watkins, David (1996: 119)

⁵³³ Ibid., (1996: 119). As with Watkins, June Edmunds attributes the Arab-Israel wars on the shift towards a more neutralist consensus, but does not share Watkins' assertion that the 1973 rebellion was an ‘epoch-making’ (Watkins, 1996: 118) event, rather stating that the ‘1956, 1967 and, especially, the 1973 wars did produce some cracks in the party's support for Israel.’⁵³³ Edmunds, June (May, 1998: 112)

‘The 1970 Labour Party Conference accepted the NEC Statement which contained all the elements for what the Labour Party believes would be a just and lasting peace in the Middle East and which incorporated the proposals in UN Resolution 242.’⁵³⁴

From 7 key factors accepted by the party, only number 5 contained a reference to the Palestinians: ‘The need for a humane solution of the refugee problem as a precondition for a lasting Middle East settlement.’⁵³⁵ Nonetheless, the statement clearly illustrates that the Palestinians had by now come to at least occur in the thinking of a large section of the party and the decision and policy-making process. As the 1973, the Programme notes:

‘The other important factor in the present situation is the necessity of involving the Palestinian community fully in any settlement which has a chance of working.’⁵³⁶

While the need to include the Palestinians is a notable inclusion on all previous Labour documents, the acceptance of Israel as an equal perpetrator of violence and terror is also a key development in the *currency of language*. As the programme continues to state:

‘The numerous events in recent months of terror and counter-terror carried out by the main protagonists The killing of innocent people, for whatever reason and wherever it takes place, cannot be condoned or defended. Effective action must be taken to protect potential victims of piracy, hijackings and all other forms of international terrorism directed against the innocent. Yet this is dealing with the symptoms of what is wrong rather than with the root cause which the failure to find a fair and humane solution to the problems of the Palestinian community.

⁵³⁴ Labour’s Programme (1973: 119) *Labour’s Programme for Britain: Annual Conference 1973*, Section 13, *World Peace, International Order and Human Rights, The Middle East*, (London: Labour Party)

⁵³⁵ Ibid., (1973: 19)

⁵³⁶ Ibid., (1973: 19)

Whatever the circumstances which induced them to leave their homes, however justified or unjustified their fears may have been; whether or not they were victims of the propaganda of their own leaders, the fact remains that, . . . a body of people in the area who are dispossessed and who, until their future is seriously taken into account in the search for peace, will continue to act as a destabilising factor threatening the prospects for a peaceful settlement in the Middle East.⁵³⁷

And as such, therefore:

‘Labour remains committed in general and in particular to the terms of Resolution 242 and, in view of the circumstances prevailing when Labour returns to office, will consider how best to undertake a fresh diplomatic initiative to secure the application of that resolution.’⁵³⁸

The process of recognition of Palestinian rights was enhanced still further in 1976:

‘Since then [1973] it has become increasingly clear that the rights of the Palestinian people must be recognised and that they must be fully involved in any settlement if it is to prove lasting. Unless and until their future is seriously taken into account . . . they will remain a destabilising factor. . . .’⁵³⁹

A key and notable difference between the 1973 and 1976 policy statements was the inclusion of a direct and distinct reference to the Palestinians as a national group:

‘Recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people to the expression of its national identity.’⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁷ Ibid., (1973: 120)

⁵³⁸ Ibid., (1973: 120)

⁵³⁹ Labour’s Programme (1976: 136) *Labour’s Programme for Britain: Annual Conference 1976*, Section 21, *The Middle East and Asia, The Middle East*, (London: Labour Party)

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid., (1976: 136)

James Callaghan and Post-1973 Labour policy

The man who had to synthesise this developing drive for greater even-handedness towards the Arab-Israel conflict with Labour foreign policy was ultimately James Callaghan. He made the transition from Shadow Foreign Affairs Spokesman to Foreign Secretary when Labour returned to office in 1974. Callaghan described his period as Foreign Secretary as 'two happy years in this Rolls Royce of Departments.'⁵⁴¹ Callaghan mapped out the role of the post, and his own philosophy regarding foreign affairs:

'I went to the Foreign Office with fixed objectives, some of which arose from Party commitments and others from my own sense of priorities

A Labour Foreign Secretary cannot tilt at every windmill but he must seek to apply principles to foreign policy - peace, justice, human rights and human dignity, opposition to racial discrimination and support for the principles of the United Nation's Charter. He must recognise Britain's diminished international power, and exert his influence in those areas and organisations where such principles can best be furthered, while being ready to take such other initiatives as he can construct. He must use foreign policy to bolster Britain's economic strength, and in turn that will increase Britain's influence in international affairs.'⁵⁴²

Callaghan's uncluttered approach to foreign affairs, - in contrast to some of his Labour colleagues - was highly fortuitous for a party struggling to come to terms with the new realisms of the post-1973 Arab-Israel conflict, in particular with the economic realities emerging from the suspension of oil supplies as a negotiating mechanism by the Arab oil producing states. Callaghan was friendly with the younger Israeli leaders

⁵⁴¹ Callaghan, James (1987: 294) *Time and Chance*, Part Four, *Foreign Secretary*, Chapter 10, (London: Collins)

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*, (1987: 296)

like Shimon Peres⁵⁴³ and Yitzhak Rabin,⁵⁴⁴ but also developed a deep friendship with the Egyptian leader, Anwar el-Sadat, whom he described as ‘a serious and sensible far-seeing man.’⁵⁴⁵ Thus his position on the Arab/Palestinian-Israel subject was well-informed and even-handed. Academic historian Kenneth O. Morgan describes Callaghan’s position thus:

‘Since the 1940s he had taken a relatively balanced view on the Israel-Palestinian issue. He was neither emotionally pro-Israeli as Wilson was, nor dogmatically anti-Zionist and pro-Palestinian like George Brown. It was well known that an Israeli Labour leader like David Ben-Gurion always refused to meet Brown in person, whereas Callaghan’s personal relations with the Israeli Labour Party were perfectly good.’⁵⁴⁶

Callaghan himself says of his first trip to the Middle East while in opposition in January and February 1974:

‘I have recalled it especially because it marked the beginning of a close friendship between President Sadat of Egypt and myself. I had known the leaders of Israel well for many years, but had never previously met Sadat and was anxious to do so before the British general election, which seemed likely to take place during 1974.’⁵⁴⁷

Callaghan explains how his trip had a ‘dual purpose:’ to ‘mend fences with Arab leaders in order to avoid any remote possibility that the Labour Party’s close links with Israel might lead to an oil embargo against Britain if we won the election’, and at

⁵⁴³ Shimon Peres (b.1923) was born in Wiszniew, Poland, arrived Palestine, 1934. PM: 1984-1986, 1995-1996; Foreign Minister, 1986-1988; Vice Premier, 1988-1990; Labor leader, 1977-1992, 1995-1996, and Alignment leader, (alliance of key left-wing Parties), 1977-1992.

⁵⁴⁴ Yitzhak Rabin (b.1923-d.1995) was born in Jerusalem, Palestine. PM and Labor leader, 1992-1995; Alignment leader, 1973-1977; Minister of Defence, 1984-1990.

⁵⁴⁵ Callaghan, James (1987: 291) Chapter 9

⁵⁴⁶ Kenneth Morgan O. (1997: 401) *Callaghan: A Life*, Chapter 4, 1912-1964 *Backbench Critic*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

⁵⁴⁷ Callaghan, James (1987: 289-290) Part Four, Chapter 9, *Foreign Secretary*

the same time to 'reassure Israel that we would not depart from the party's historic friendship for that country.'⁵⁴⁸ He continues:

'There was of course little likelihood of our doing so with Harold Wilson as our leader. Indeed, when we won the election and I became Foreign Secretary he told me that he would not want a meticulous account of my handling of foreign policy with the exception of two areas - Israel and South Africa, the latter because of his honourable detestation of apartheid.'⁵⁴⁹

Although Wilson remained firmly pro-Israel he had not entirely failed to absorb the lessons of the 1973 parliamentary party rebellion. Callaghan says Wilson had conveyed, via his Foreign Secretary, the position of Labour in relation to its historic ties with Israel to Sadat, but Callaghan also confirmed a new approach from the party to the Palestinians:

'I explained to the Arab States that, while the Labour Party would not perform a 'U-turn' in its relations with Israel, nevertheless it was my intention to increase our contacts with and our understanding of the Arab world, and to emphasis that the Party recognised that the Palestinian people had a legitimate aspiration. These should be settled by negotiation as a priority issue before a real peace could ensue.'⁵⁵⁰

It is with a sense of irony that Sadat responds to Labour's new position on the Palestinians with more than a hint at the ideological contradiction between the socialist Labour Party's associations with Israel in terms of its policies towards the Palestinians. Again, as Callaghan relates:

'Sadat was clearly pleased that I had visited him as a representative of the Labour Party, and remarked that it was a sadness to him that he had received

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid., (1987: 289-290)

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid., (1987: 289-290)

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid., (1987: 290)

greater support in the past from the Conservatives despite the fact that his domestic aims and ideals were nearer to our own.’⁵⁵¹

On the basis of Sadat’s remarks it could be said that Sadat was more awake to the *essential dilemma* that confronted the Labour Party in its dealings with Israel, certainly more than Wilson was, and possibly even Callaghan. Nonetheless, the dilemma was by now making itself firmly and uncomfortably felt within the party to the degree that it was having a consequent effect in terms of an adjustment in the party consensus but also the trajectory of policy.

James Callaghan, David Owen and the Camp David Peace Process

On becoming Labour Leader in April 1976, Callaghan appointed his deputy, Anthony Crosland as Foreign Secretary. On Crosland’s death David Owen⁵⁵² succeeded to the post. Owen represented a new parliamentary and demographic generation of Labour MPs who had entered Parliament in the mid 1960s.

As with many Labour figures, Owen possessed a deep Christian faith which also provided the foundations for his socialist political ideology. Apart from his father’s occupation as a Vicar, one of the earliest religious influences occurred while a university student:

‘The secular aspects of life around Great St. Mary’s [University Church, Cambridge University], the discussions, the talks, the sermons by eminent visitors organized by [Rector] Mervyn Stockwood [later Bishop of Southwark], all linking Christian values to social issues, would have attracted me to the Church in any case. Then, as in my childhood, and as it is now, going periodically to church was an important part of my life. Brought up in a

⁵⁵¹ Ibid., (1987: 290)

⁵⁵² Dr David Owen (b.1938) MP: (Plymouth Sutton, 1966-1974), (Plymouth Devonport, 1974-1992); Foreign Secretary, February 1977-May 1979

Christian family, influenced by my grandfather [Congregational Minister]
The unique example of Jesus Christ's life has never left me.'⁵⁵³

It was not from Owen's Christian background however, that he derived his interest in the Middle East. Owen says his primary interest in the region was Israel, an interest that began to firmly develop a year after he became a Labour MP in 1967:

'Israel has been an area of special and personal interest for me ever since my wife began to act as literary agent for Amos Oz⁵⁵⁴ In fact, I visited Israel first in 1967, soon after the Arab-Israeli War. Ever since, I have watched carefully every twist and turn in the complicated politics of Israel itself and the region generally. In all that time the personalities have been as important as the politics for the region.'⁵⁵⁵

During the 1973 October War Owen had taken a decidedly pro-Israel position: his contempt for the policy of neutrality adopted by the Conservative government is all too apparent. As Owen says:

'I was appalled when the Foreign Secretary, Lord Home, and Prime Minister, Edward Heath, refused to supply, during the actual fighting, shells for the Centurion tanks that Israel had bought from us. I considered it then, and still do [1991], the most cynical act of British foreign policy since Suez [1956]. It showed not just Arab influence within the Foreign Office but a total lack of principle in standing by one's commitments from two politicians whom I hitherto respected.'⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵³ Harris, Kenneth (1987: 14) *David Owen: Personally Speaking to Kenneth Harris*, Chapter 2, *Cambridge, Medical School, The Labour Party*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson)

⁵⁵⁴ Amos Oz (b.1939) Israeli novelist and essayist, born Jerusalem, Palestine, of Polish and Russian Jewish parentage; a left-wing Labor apologist for political Zionism, Likud's more radical expansionist policies in the Occupied Territories, Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, and response to the 1987 *Intifadah* influence Oz towards an Oslo agreement position by 1993.

⁵⁵⁵ Harris, Kenneth (1987: 158) Chapter 7, *Disarmament and Defence, Iran and Israel*

⁵⁵⁶ Owen, David (1991: 209) *Time to Declare*, (London: Michael Joseph Press)

Owen was all too aware that Britain's - and Labour's - standing in Israel had been seriously damaged by the position taken in 1973. His own pro-Israel inclinations might have been part of the reason why Callaghan selected him for the post, especially in view of the all influencing spectre of Wilson. Owen notes:

'Jim [James Callaghan] was always very conscious of the Labour Party's links with Israel. The party was represented in the House of Commons by a large number of Jewish MPs and had considerable support from Jewish voters in a number of seats.

Jim felt there was a special bond between the Labour Party and the Israeli people. One of the expressions of that feeling was that while I was at the Foreign Office, I became the first [serving] British Foreign Secretary to make a visit to the Israeli state.'⁵⁵⁷

Furthermore, Callaghan was conscious, as was Owen, of the continuing interest and influence of the, by now, retired Harold Wilson. As Owen confirms:

'Soon after my appointment [1977], Jim [Prime Minister, James Callaghan] mentioned informally that Harold Wilson has said when he retired that he would loyally support Jim's Government even if he thought it was wrong, with one exception. The exception was Israel. I knew, therefore, that I had to watch this issue carefully.'⁵⁵⁸

Thus, despite the evidence of a deviation from the pro-Israel consensus within the party, and while trying to accommodate it in part through re-establishing good relations with key and relevant Arab states, - one element of which was recognition of Palestinian rights, Callaghan's government retained an essentially pro-Israel policy for reasons of *internal determinants* in the form of a largely pro-Israel leadership, which despite his undoubted influence was only partly moderated by Callaghan's

⁵⁵⁷ Harris, Kenneth (1987: 158-159)

⁵⁵⁸ Owen, David (1991: 261)

pragmatic and at times constructive and close relationship with Arab leaders and states.

Irrespective of the imposing influences of Callaghan and the still formidable guiding spirit of Wilson, the gradual but nevertheless significantly changing dynamics within the party on the Arab/Palestinian-Israel issue increasingly took Labour's position beyond the direct influence of individuals or hierarchy. This development began to impinge on Labour's approach to policy-making in the form of Britain's membership of the European Economic Community (EEC).

Regardless of the powerful pro-Israel perspectives from the highest levels of the party, by the early 1980s, and with Labour once more out of office, David Owen began to view the primary source of Arab disquiet with Britain as being the position taken towards the Palestinians. At the same time it was perfectly evident to Owen and others, that Britain's economy and reliance on Arab oil supplies had profound implications for British national interests - and Labour's. As a consequence, Owen began to view the EEC as a vehicle for registering a more equitable British position while bypassing some of the problems arising from offending Israel and the *essential dilemma*. As he said at the time: 'Europe, not only understands their regional problems but is dealing responsibly with their major political concern - Palestine.'⁵⁵⁹ And as he further elaborated the European tack:

'It has been possible to hold an overall Community position on the Middle East, and to make this position more realistic in relation to the legitimate rights of the Palestinians than has been feasible for the US or politically acceptable for Britain if we had been acting alone.'^{560 561}

⁵⁵⁹ Owen, David (1981: 209) *Face the Future*, Part Three. Chapter 9, *The Mixed Economy, Energy Policy*, (London: Jonathan Cape)

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid., (1981: 525) Part Five. Chapter 20, *International Socialism, The Community of Twelve*

⁵⁶¹ A further facility existed in the Parliamentary Association for Euro-Arab Co-operation (PAEAC) (1974) an All-Party Group promoting a greater role for the European Union in Middle Eastern affairs.

As Owen observes, the facility and arrival at an 'overall Community position' lifted Labour somewhat from the direct responsibility for policy on Israel-Palestinian issues (some two decades before Oslo facilitated the same circumstances and opportunity); the collective EEC decision and policy-making ethos was similar to the Cabinet ethos of consensus politics which also served to counter some of the pro-Israel response from within the party and Israel. Furthermore, an additional mechanism to side-step the shadow of the *essential dilemma* was also derived from collective representative of socialist and social democratic parties in the EEC - as they were easily linked to the more established forum of the Socialist International. As Owen illustrates:

'Active in the Socialist International, and a strong advocate of better relations between Europe and the Third World, [Bruno] Kreisky [Austrian Chancellor, Socialist Party] has been particularly effective in encouraging dialogue between Israel and the Arab World. Yasser Arafat,⁵⁶² leader of the Palestine Liberation Organisation [PLO],⁵⁶³ took part in discussions with socialist leaders at a Party leaders' conference of the Socialist International held in Vienna, under Kreisky's auspices, in February 1980.'⁵⁶⁴

If Europe was one important *external determinant* in the deviation process from a pro-Israel to a neutralist position for Labour and Owen, the second was the decline and fall of the Labor Party in Israel and the rise of the right-wing Likud bloc.

⁵⁶² Yasser Arafat (b.1929-d.2004) a Palestinian and leader of *Al-Fatah* the secular socialist party he joint founded in 1959. President, Palestinian National Authority (PNA), 1996-2004.

⁵⁶³ The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and the Palestine National Council (PNC) - the PLO's supreme political body - were founded in 1964, and is effectively the Palestinian government in exile. The military wing, the Palestine Liberation Army, was established in the same year. The PLO and PNC are comprised of many political and religious parties (Yasser Arafat's Party - *Al-Fatah* (est.1957) - joined the PNC in 1968), trades unions and the Palestinian people. Established ostensibly as a unifying body for the Palestinian Diaspora, the PLO was also a political and military response to the failures of Arab states to recover Palestine, and a mechanism to prevent complete political control by host states.

⁵⁶⁴ Owen, David (1981: 61-62) Part One, Chapter 4, *Social Democracy, The Social Democratic Tradition*

The Israeli Labor Party had been in power, albeit in various guises, since Israel's founding in 1948. However a general fatigue born of the Israeli Labor Party's complacency in dealing with domestic issues, a series of political and financial scandals, and accusations of military and political incompetence in the 1973 war, led to the election of a right-wing bloc - collectively referred to as Likud - in 1977. Likud comprised some of the most extreme right-wing parties within the spectrum of religious and political Zionism, the core binding factor being the concept of an *Eretz Israel* (Greater Israel) based on the biblical borders of the ancient Hebrew kingdoms. Likud was heavily influenced by the revisionist political Zionism of Ze'ev Jabotinski which left little if any room for compromise with the Palestinians.

Although the Israeli Labor Party had initiated the settlement policies in the Occupied Territories (and indeed had its own record of atrocities against the Palestinians), Likud presented a more strident and ferocious approach to the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories and the Arab World in general, which struck a profoundly discordant note with pro-Israel sympathizers in the Labour Party. The Israeli Labor Party, floundering in the wake of its first election defeat and disorientated by its own inability to reconcile occupation with its socialist ideological underpinnings, initiated one ideological or political compromise after another. As a result, it became increasingly difficult for British Labour Party figures to distinguish between the policies of Israeli Labor Party and those of the Likud bloc. This was particularly true when the Israel Labor Party joined Likud in a series of coalition governments between 1984 until 1990. As David Watkins says, in many ways Labor and Likud became 'different sides of the same coin' in Israel.⁵⁶⁵ When still Foreign Secretary, Owen had noted these political changes in Israel and their significance for his own Labour Party:

'The defeat of the Labour Party coalition in the Israeli elections of early 1977 came as a surprise and a disappointment to us in the UK, and we became anxious when we saw that it was replaced by a right-wing government, the Likud coalition, dominated by the extremist Herut Party, led by Menachem

⁵⁶⁵ Watkins, David (06.07.2003: 8)

Begin.⁵⁶⁶ We knew of Begin as a fundamentalist, an autocrat, and an uncompromising nationalist. We also knew that he was no friend of Britain: he had been the leader of the Irgun in its resistance to British rule in Palestine.⁵⁶⁷

Despite the evident difficulties and his own reservations towards the man, Callaghan illustrated his keen pragmatism as he instructed Owen to invite Begin to Britain. The difference between Callaghan's relationship with Sadat and that with Menachem Begin could not have been greater. As Callaghan states:

'I had met Prime Minister Begin some years earlier in Jerusalem before he came to office, when a conversation between us had ended in a fierce dispute, although as always, he never became discourteous. Later, when we were both in office, I decided to invite him to London [1978], a fact that he much appreciated in view of his desperate hostility towards Britain in the period preceding the establishment of the State of Israel. We had then called him a terrorist. He saw himself as a Jewish patriot.'⁵⁶⁸

Owen viewed Begin's visit - perhaps somewhat naively - as an opportunity to 'keep up the pressure on Israel to create the conditions for a settlement of the West Bank problem.'⁵⁶⁹ However, there were two very distinct sides to Begin and Likud which were to have profound consequences for the *basis* and *nature* of Labour-Israel *relations*, and the divergence process, as Kenneth Harris - Owen's biographer states:

⁵⁶⁶ Callaghan's decisive and rapid move towards embracing the unwanted but cold realities of Israeli politics was to yield some benefits in the negotiation that led to Camp David in 1979. As Owen states: 'It is not generally known that Jim Callaghan's government played a modest but nevertheless valuable role in the events which led to the historic meeting between Egypt and Israel, September 1978, at Camp David, and also in the events which led to the signing of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel the following March.' Harris, Kenneth (1987: 158) *quoting*, David Owen

⁵⁶⁷ Harris, Kenneth (1987:159) *quoting*, David Owen

⁵⁶⁸ Callaghan, James (1987: 487)

⁵⁶⁹ Harris, Kenneth (1987: 160) *quoting*, David Owen

‘Nobody can take from Begin his place in history as the Prime Minister of Israel who secured for the first time the recognition of the State of Israel by an Arab state [1979 Camp David Accords]. Yet it is equally true that Begin could never have brought a solution to the problems of the Palestinians and the West Bank.’⁵⁷⁰

As a result, Owen’s notions of putting ‘some flesh on the concept of self-rule [for the Palestinians] on the West Bank’⁵⁷¹ were essentially futile. For Begin in the context of an *Eretz Israel* (literally, the Land of Israel; conceptually, a Greater or Biblical Israel) there was little room for compromise and even less for a resolution. ‘Flesh on the bones’ of the Palestinian question was an anathema to Begin, as Owen and Labour came to steadily realise.^{572 573}

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid., (1987:161) *quoting*, David Owen

⁵⁷¹ Ibid., (1987:161) *quoting*, David Owen

⁵⁷² Rt. Hon Don Concannon recites an encounter with Begin and Labor figures in Israel in 1967: ‘Most of the Israeli leaders used to belong to terrorist organisations: [Yitzhak] Shamir and Begin. One delegation that I went on we had to meet the Israeli War Cabinet, Begin was in the Cabinet; he was not the Prime Minister then [1967] but he and Shamir were in the War Cabinet. He came dashing up to me to shake my hand. I just shoved it to one side. The immediate reaction of everybody else in the Israeli Cabinet was that they came up to shake my hand for doing that to Begin. He was bloody hated by many of his own people, but then again so he should be.’ Concannon, Don (20.07.2002: 1) *Interview: Concannon-Nelson*, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire

⁵⁷³ D. Cameron Watt offers an assessment of a number of Labour’s post-1945 Foreign Secretaries in terms of their vocation to the post as diplomats, some of the reasons for their appointments and their relations to the premier: ‘Michael Stewart and Patrick Gordon Walker (though his tenure of the post was so short that it is difficult to be sure), commended themselves to their premiers as persons prepared to take second place to prime ministerial instructions into diplomacy. Several others, notably . . . George Brown, James Callaghan, Anthony Crosland, would appear, from what is known of their personal relations with the prime minister they served, to have found themselves in office more for the political weight that they carried in wings of the parties whose support and loyalty to the premier in question were not altogether certain (at least to him or himself) than for any previous record of success in the field of foreign affairs. David Owen’s promotion on the sudden death of Anthony Crosland . . . was paradoxically inspired by the inverse of such calculations, the need to fill

For the Labour Party, Begin and Likud were something of an impediment, despite the conclusion of the Camp David Accords. The Israeli government's policy of rapid colonisation of the Occupied Territories, and the growing evidence of the brutally suppressive policies which accompanied that settlement, could not be attributed solely to the right-wing of the Israeli political spectrum: these policies had been initiated by an Israeli Labor government between 1967 and 1977. And even as Likud became more aggressive towards the Palestinians, the Israeli Labor Party was unable and/or unwilling to resist on either ideological or political grounds. Instead, it collaborated with them through participation in National Unity Governments between 1984 and 1992. The evidence that the Israeli polity was a brutally effective colonial entity and one in which the Labour movement was a prime component, was hard for the British Labour Party to accept for many individuals, not least in light of Labour's tradition pro-political Zionism. In the Israeli political circumstances and whatever the personal preference of the leadership, it became increasingly difficult to ignore the full dimensions of the *essential dilemma*, hence Owen's advocacy that Labour position itself in the slip-stream of the policy obligations put forward by Europe and the Socialist International.

It was not only Labour's leading figures that were increasingly aware of the discordances of their party's policies. In previous elections, it had been a high risk strategy for an MP to stand against the pro-political Zionist lobby both within and beyond the party. In the words of Labour MP Ernest Ross:⁵⁷⁴

'I mean they saw what happened to some of their colleagues after the 1967 war after they stood up and attacked Israel, some of them lost their seats; and

the foreign secretaryship without destroying the existing balance of the Labour Cabinet.'⁵⁷³
 Bullen, Roger [Editor] (1984: 124), *The Foreign Office 1782-1982*, Chapter 6, Watt, Cameron D., *Foreign Secretaries as Diplomats*, (Frederick Maryland: University Publication of America)

⁵⁷⁴ Ernest "Ernie" Ross (b.1945) MP: (Dundee West, 1979-2005)

that is always in the back of an MP's mind: am I going to lose my seat over an issue called Palestine?'⁵⁷⁵

However, in the wake of the 1967 and 1973 wars and as the media came to give a growing and more sympathetic coverage to the Palestinians' plight, the pro-Israel influence upon the constituency and electorate was decreasing, as an analysis of British public opinion in the period illustrates:

'Up until the early 1970s the problem was always referred to as the Arab-Israeli conflict or, simply, the Middle East conflict. From 1973 on, the problem began to be perceived differently. The Palestinians began to assume their role as central actors in shaping their own destiny.

Furthermore, with the exception of the Israeli public, those interviewed in North America and Europe began to recognise that there is a legitimate Palestinian grievance. . . . And, in spite of continued general sympathy towards Israel, the need to settle the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is seen as a central precondition to peace in the region.'⁵⁷⁶

The outstanding military success of Israel in 1967 and its less impressive but nonetheless successful defence in 1973, combined with the evidence of massive American military protection for the state, had altered public perceptions of a small, vulnerable country, - the 'David' analogy - 'surrounded' by 'hostile' Arab powers, - the 'Goliath' analogy. This was only enhanced by the evidence of Israeli settlement practices in the Occupied Territories and the refusal of Israel to accede to the requirements of international law in terms of relinquishing those lands in return for a resolution. Simultaneously, for the British Labour Party the harsh and ultimately uncompromising ideological reality had struck at the heart of Labour figures that the Palestinian issue was definitively identified as being a key factor for the Arabs in their conflict with Israel, a conflict that threatened British oil supplies and the broader

⁵⁷⁵ Ross, Ernest (16.09.2004: 14)

⁵⁷⁶ Zureik, Elia & Moughrabi, Fouad (Editors) (1987: 2) *Public Opinion and the Palestine Question, Introduction*, (Beckenham: Croom Helm)

economy. The Labour Party was forced to respond to a new reality, but found less resistance than previously had been the case in the electorate from whom they sought support.

Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding and the Labour Middle East Council

The process of deviation from the pro-Zionist consensus during this period (1956-1980s) was reflected in, and facilitated by, the establishment of two important pro-Arab/Palestinian interest groups: the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding (CAABU)⁵⁷⁷ (1969) and the Labour Middle East Council (LMEC) (1969).⁵⁷⁸ The two groups, the first of which was an All-Party body, were formed in recognition that British politicians were woefully ill-informed and often deliberately misinformed on matters relating to the Middle East, and the Arab/Palestinian-Israel conflict in particular. The 1967 war had generated a new audience seeking additional and more balanced information. As a purely Labour enterprise the LMES, moreover, was dedicated to addressing the policy approach of the party itself. David Watkins (co-founder and chair of LMEC, 1974-1983) stated that the motive for forming LMEC in 1969 was as 'an expression of the growing concern in the Labour Party at the unfair official approach to the problems of the Middle East'⁵⁷⁹ arising from the 1967 war. In other words, LMEC was the expression of divergence of the party, or sections of it, from the pro-political Zionist consensus of earlier years and of the party leadership. The emphasis on greater equability in Labour's approach as opposed to pro-Arab/Palestinian purposes of the group is evidenced as follows:

⁵⁷⁷ In addition to CAABU and LMEC a number of important groups emerged in the period after 1967: including Free Palestine Campaign (1969), Palestine Solidarity Campaign (1982), Palestine Return Centre (c.1997), and the Palestine General Delegation to the U.K. and the Office of Representation of the PLO to the Holy See.

⁵⁷⁸ Similarly, the Liberal Middle East Council (LIBMEC) (1980) and the Conservative Middle East Council (CMEC) (1980) were subsequently founded.

⁵⁷⁹ Watkins, David (1975: 2) *Labour and Palestine*, (London: Labour Middle East Council)

‘The Labour movement needs to establish that its interest in the Middle East is based on a commitment to justice and progress and not on automatic support of any one Party.’⁵⁸⁰

Adding:

‘That LMEC will work for the implementation of United Nations resolutions to that effect by promoting inside the Labour movement a constructive and balanced view of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This is socialist thinking entirely in line with the Labour Party’s constitutional commitment to promote peace, settle international disputes and defend human rights through support for the United Nations.’⁵⁸¹

The group explicitly acknowledged the existence and consequences of the *essential dilemma*: for the LMEC the party’s relations with political Zionism represent a contradiction because political Zionism as a nationalistic, colonial and para-military movement represents a contradiction with Labour’s socialism. In short, a socialist Labour Party does not equate to the ideology and activities of political Zionism, and *vice versa*:

‘From its inception, [political] Zionism has been a nationalistic philosophy which is in any case contrary to the basic concepts of Democratic Socialism.’⁵⁸²

The LMEC was initiated and organised by an elected Executive Committee which organised conference fringe meetings, high profile speakers, including Palestinians. In addition to meetings, Labour figures supported seminars at venues around the country which were directed at venues related to the trades union movement; these activities were supported by a regular newsletter, pamphlets and other published materials, while noting that the overall aim remained to press for change in Labour’s policy position primarily within the forum of parliament:

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., (1975: 2)

⁵⁸¹ Ibid., (1975: 2)

⁵⁸² Ibid., (1975: 2)

‘Above all, we operated in parliament, constantly speaking and putting questions as well as lobbying ministers and fellow members, to say nothing of Foreign Office officials.’⁵⁸³

By 1976, the activities propagating a more even-handed approach among Labour figures - and their criticisms of their own party - were becoming media news. In the *Palestine Report* Labour MPs David Watkins and Andrew Faulds⁵⁸⁴ (and future MP Peter Hain)^{585 586} conveyed what they saw as the historical origins of Labour’s pro-Israel position:

‘The Labour government’s attitude to the Palestinian is ambivalent, reflecting the Labour Party’s attitude. The Party has a long standing association with Israel, yet is subject to growing uneasiness over the injustice perpetuated against the Palestinians and which is wholly at variance with the Party’s fundamental philosophy of social justice.’⁵⁸⁷

Andrew Faulds stated more forcefully:

‘I have argued for a number of years that the British government should take note of the realities of the Middle East situation, both politically and economically, and should adopt a policy of responding to the friendship towards this country that the Arab states have shown over a long period. Such a policy should involve a recognition of the rights of the Palestinians and of the PLO So far successive British governments, but most notably the Labour government, has declined to adopt such a course, although the

⁵⁸³ Ibid., (1996: 126)

⁵⁸⁴ Andrew Faulds (b.1923-d.2000) MP: (Smethwick, 1966-1974), (Warley East, 1974-1997)

⁵⁸⁵ Peter Hain (b.1950) MP: (Neath, 1991-present)

⁵⁸⁶ Emlyn Hooson (Liberal MP) contributed an essay titled, *Palestine: A Case to be Heard*

⁵⁸⁷ Watkins, David (1976 [May 4,]: 24) *Britain’s Vital Role in Palestine The Palestine Report*, (Free Palestine Information Office, London and Eurabia Ltd, Media Representation / *The Guardian*)

diatribes of ignorance and the prejudice of the past have become more muted.’⁵⁸⁸

Although there was thus a discernible change in the thinking and position of some Labour figures on the Israel-Palestinian question in the early 1970s, and although such views might have found a more sympathetic public audience than had previously been the case, the consequences for a Labour figure with a more impartial position could still be serious within the party. Frequently, the source of these repercussions came from pro-Israel figures, often, though not exclusively allied to external pro-Israel groups. Ernest Ross illustrates that as late as 1978 raising the issue of Labour’s pro-Israel position within their constituency parties held risks: ‘When you did, the forces of reaction came down on you like a ‘ton of bricks.’⁵⁸⁹ Ross’ experience is reiterated by David Watkins:

‘. . . during that period of the sixties and into the seventies, any Labour Member of Parliament who spoke out in any way critical of the Israelis, ferocious attempts were made to try and cause trouble in his or her constituency Labour Party.’⁵⁹⁰

Watkins adding that:

‘In referring to the fascist-like reaction of the Israeli lobby, I use the description deliberately, for their tactics were to try to destroy anyone who dared to question them. Another MP who was active in support of the Arab cause was Mrs Margaret McKay.’⁵⁹¹ I saw examples of the obscene hate mail

⁵⁸⁸ Faulds, Andrew (1976 [May 14,]: 26) *Europe Ignoring the Palestinian Voice*

⁵⁸⁹ Ross, Ernest (16.09.2004: 10)

⁵⁹⁰ Watkins, David (06.07.2003: 7)

⁵⁹¹ Margaret MacKay (b.1911-d.1996) MP: (Clapham, 1964-1970) retired from politics to Abu Dhabi, Emirate, United Arab Emirates. Mackay outraged Michael Stewart (Labour Foreign Secretary) in 1968 by staging a mock Palestinian refugee camp in Trafalgar Square and wearing Arab dress in Parliament to protest at the Palestinians predicament. Jordan issued a postage stamp to honour her protest. Stewart commented: ‘And I’m expected to run a

with which she was inundated and which included packets of excreta. A usual tactic was to create trouble between an MP and his or her Constituency Labour Party and there, she was subjected to a scurrilous campaign.’⁵⁹²

Ross contributes further examples of the possible consequences for Labour figures that became interested and actively advocated an increased emphasis on impartiality or held a pro-Arab/Palestinian position:

‘Forces from within the Party, from the NEC [National Executive Committee] downwards would have a go at you; the media would have a go at you; things would start to happen; they would start to look what you were doing. If you were an MP they would start looking at what that MP does? If he spends an awful lot of time in the Public House - then perhaps the public should know! I am not saying there was some sort of great conspiracy; it is a lot simpler than that: they are just aware of the need to defend their issues, and their issues - is the state of Israel.’⁵⁹³

In this troubled atmosphere, Labour figures advocating even-handedness found new allies in the emergence of a group of representatives (*Ambassadors de facto*) appointed by the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) stationed in the capitals of Western Europe. Their primary purpose was to forge contacts with political and diplomatic figures, - and the media. Initiated as a part of the greater reform and modernisation of the PLO after the largely disastrous murderous campaigns of the previous two decades, the representatives were also installed to facilitate the conveyance of PLO policy developments that placed an increasing emphasis upon political and diplomatic initiatives with a diminishing role for armed resistance in relation to Israel.

constructive British foreign policy in the Middle East with this women’s vote!’ Dalyell, Tam Obituary: Margaret MacKay, March 6, 1996, *The Independent*,

http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qn4158/is_19960306/ai_n14029391

⁵⁹² Watkins, David (1996: 114-115)

⁵⁹³ Ross, Ernest (16.09.2004: 10)

Over two eventful decades (1970s and 1980s) the PLO moved from the policy position of recovering all of mandate Palestine to proposing some form of bi-national or two state resolutions - that inevitably involves mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO. Foremost among these representatives was the PLO representative to London (1975-1978), Said Hammami, considered to be one of the 'PLO's most accomplished diplomats' and a 'well-known dove.'⁵⁹⁴ He was 'bitterly opposed by the Israeli lobby.'⁵⁹⁵ ⁵⁹⁶ What these PLO representatives also came to represent - in many instances - were the first direct contact between Labour politicians and moderate Palestinians, advocating a negotiated settlement between Israel and the Palestinians. This was in a period before either the mainstream PLO or Israel had dared utter such positions. These contacts also began to erode the perception of Palestinians - and Arabs generally - as obstinate terrorists, and gave a platform for dialogue with Palestinians directly conveying their history and current predicament. Thus, in contrast to the decline of Israel in the minds of Labour figures, as the lines between Labor and Likud became ever more smudged by a series of coalitions and half a decade in opposition, the Palestinian perspective continued to raise its profile and find support within Labour and Britain generally.

A decade of Israeli Labor Party intransigence towards the Palestinians and Arab states, followed by the acceleration and expansion of illegal settlement building in the Occupied Territories and the assassination of PLO representatives like Said Hammami, provided further evidence to an increasing number of Labour figures that

⁵⁹⁴ Seale, Patrick (1992: 43/49) *Abu Nidal: A Gun for Hire*, Chapter 2, *Abu Iyad's Obsession*, (London: Hutchinson)

⁵⁹⁵ Watkins (1996: 125)

⁵⁹⁶ Said Hammami was assassinated in London (04.01.1978) See: Seale, Patrick (1992: 46-50) However, the *essential dilemma* - which had troubled many Labour figures - also troubled Hammami. As Watkins' said of Hammami: 'The Zionist power in the Labour Party puzzled and saddened him. He said . . . that when we he met and talked with Labour MPs and other party activists, he found himself so much in agreement with their general philosophy and policy, which was what he wanted in Palestine for his own people, that he could not see how they could have ever have strongly supported the policy that denied and crushed all Palestinian aspirations.' Watkins, David (1996: 126)

it was Israel - rather than perhaps the Palestinian and Arabs - that were the 'unwilling partner in peace.' This mindset among Labour figures became even more prevalent with the Israeli Labor Party's participation in Likud-led coalition governments when it became even more difficult to distinguish between Labor and Likud policies which generated the 'different sides of the same coin' analogy within the Labour Party. The degree and level of the deviation was such that even Harold Wilson was to express his own emerging public disillusionment with Israel:

'The impression I formed of Israel, under Menachem Begin's Government, was the unhappiest I have known. . . . Israel at this time suffers from a theocratic and bitterly divided Government. Begin is obsessed with the divisive question of Jewish control over the disputed West Bank.'⁵⁹⁷

Nonetheless, and with unquestionable progress, according to some Labour figures the work of the LMEC made slow inroads into party policy. Ernest Ross blames this on a claim that LMEC was dominated until 1979 by the right-wing of the party. He asserted that in terms of promoting the Palestinian perspective within the mainstream of the party and policy-making mechanism 'they were not challenging the party leadership in way shape or form; they were not raising it at any level inside the party. They were not doing anything.'⁵⁹⁸ In recognition that the way to changing party policy seemed through conversion of the left-wing, LMEC made further moves to infiltrate and influence the trade union movement, beginning in Scotland. In 1980 the Trade Union Friends of Palestine was formed by Yousef Allan.⁵⁹⁹ And, as Ross explains, an important development resulted:

⁵⁹⁷ Wilson, Harold (1981: 380)

⁵⁹⁸ Ross, Ernest (16.09.2004: 1-6)

⁵⁹⁹ Yousef Allan (b.1952-d.2001) a Palestinian PhD student at Dundee University (c.1974-1978) was dismayed by the representation of Palestinians and PLO within Dundee University and Dundee West Labour Party. Allen founded Friends of Palestine Society via the Dundee Students' Union (1978) and Trade Union Friends of Palestine Group (TUFPP) (1980) securing the Scottish TUC's sponsorship of a motion recognising the PLO and a secular State of Palestine at Labour's 1982 Annual Conference. LMEC claims it was due to Allen that 'TUC and Labour Party policy on the Middle East underwent such a sea-change in the 1980s.' LMEC (2004:1) *The British Labour Movement's support for Palestine*,

‘From that day on - and you can go back and check all the records, - and you will see Palestine coming on all the agendas of the Labour Party in Scotland, the Conference, the Scottish Trade Union Congress, the TUC, and the Labour Party.’⁶⁰⁰

The gradual success of this manoeuvre was such that Wilson began to note the gradual conversion of elements on the left of the party to a stance based on greater impartiality:

‘Up to the time of writing, in 1980, A study of *Hansard* reveals some forty parliamentary questions, nearly all written with written answers, and with the barest mention in debates. Some of the later questions, again mostly written, show some evidence of left-wing inspiration, mostly designed to secure an answer critical of Israel.’⁶⁰¹

Thus during this period the *external determinants* in the shape of the 1967 and 1973 wars, the impact of the Arab oil wealth upon the British national economy, and the election of the right-wing Likud government in Israel, combined with the *internal determinants* of growing knowledge of the realities of Israel and the Occupied Territories within the ranks of the parliamentary party led to a greater willingness to challenge the pro-Israel inclinations of the party leadership. This challenge arose both individually and through collective activities such as LMEC and the trades unions (not to mention an ultimate willingness to embarrass the party with outright Commons rebellions) and resulted in a steady reorientation of the party consensus in favour of

<http://www.lmpal.org.uk/>. See: Graham, Helga *The Long March: The Palestine Issue and the British Trade Unions, British Trade Unions and Palestine*, Arab Affairs, Spring 1987, Vol., 1, Issue No. 3, pp.13-25

⁶⁰⁰ Ross, Ernest (16.09.2004: 1-6)

⁶⁰¹ Wilson, Harold (1981: 377)

even-handedness. As this deviation became more apparent, there were corresponding, albeit still gradual, deviations in the policy trajectory of the party.⁶⁰²

Conclusion

What chapter 3 illustrates is that, despite the dominating leadership of Harold Wilson (who represented Labour's pro-Zionist traditions), the influence of key *external determinant* such as the 1967 and 1973 wars and the re-emergence of a distinct Palestinian dimension to the conflict, combined to further raise the spectre of the *essential dilemma* which, for many Labour and related figures at least, had hitherto been partially buried under the moral post-Holocaust impediment and creation of the State of Israel.

It is evident in this chapter that while the primary source of the *essential dilemma* condition occurs primarily as a result of the traditional pro-political Zionism, and sympathy towards Israel in the post-Holocaust period, for another section of the party the source of the condition, for the most part, results from the Palestinian predicament and their role in the wider Arab-Israel conflict. Both these position, not only caused increasing divisions within the party and significantly assisted the deviation process toward an eventual neutrality consensus and policy position, but were notably influenced by changing demographist character of the parliamentary generations of Labour MPs, as newer Labour and related figures replaced the pre-war and immediate post-1945 generations to challenge the party's pro-political Zionist orthodoxy.

The net effect of these external factors was exacerbated by the requirement of Labour as a government to secure British interests which were determined to lie with the procurement of Arab oil resources and trade with the Arab states, while not offending Israel and pro-Israel figures within the party, by adopting a more neutral position. However, evidence that the Palestinian dimension was increasingly acting upon the psychological, ideological and political components of the *essential dilemma* emerges

⁶⁰² June Edmund's notes that the Labour leadership 'during the Wilson era' (1963-1976) were 'persistently rejecting LMEC's attempts to affiliate' to the Labour Party. Edmunds, June (May, 1998: 117)

as the position of an increasing number of Labour MPs came to challenge the traditional pro-political Zionist orthodoxy of the leadership and section of the party, instigating a further sequence of internal division culminating in the pro-neutralist open parliamentary rebellion triggered by the Labour leadership's reversal to its traditional pro-Zionist policy position on the party's return to opposition during the 1973 Arab-Israel war.

In terms of addressing the source and continuity of the *essential dilemma*, although some notable and relatively successful efforts were made to address the condition, in actuality, this character trait of this period marks more of the beginnings of an addressing. Labour would lurch to the traditional Bastion of pro-political Zionist, the left-wing of the party, as the vying sections of the party sought to influence Labour's consensus and policy position.

Chapter 4

Labour's Lurch to the Left: the Pro-Palestinian Anomaly and the Neil Kinnock Era (1980-1993)

‘One of the most significant aspects of my childhood was my mother’s deep Christian convictions. Indeed, . . . when she read me Bible stories, she always distinguished between the kings of Israel who exercised power and the prophets of Israel who preached righteousness, and I was brought up to believe in the prophets rather than the kings.’⁶⁰³

Introduction

The history of the Labour Party in the 1980s and early 1990s is recorded as one of the most turbulent, traumatic and divisive in the party’s history. Four consecutive electoral defeats (1979, 1983, 1987 and 1992) encapsulated the ascendancy and departure of both the archetypal left-wing figure of Michael Foot and his successor Neil Kinnock as party leaders. Following the traumatic ‘Winter of Discontent’ in 1978/79 and subsequent election defeat, the Labour Party experienced a dramatic lurch to the left as a reaction against the apparent failure of James Callaghan’s centralist economic policies.

The subsequent adoption of far-left-wing policies in the period between 1981 and 1993 represented a unique period in Labour-Israel relations. During these years the party consensus and policy position became what can perhaps best be described as a pro-Palestinian position. The period witnessed the adoption of policies that not only recognised the Palestinians as a distinct Arab people with a legitimate claim to Palestine, but also acknowledged that the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) was the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Most

⁶⁰³ Benn, Tony [Editor: Ruth Winstone] (2004: 3-5) *Dare to be a Daniel: Then and Now, Part One: My Faith, Honest Doubt*, (London: Arrow)

significantly, Labour came to support as a policy the creation of a democratic secular State of Palestine which effectively required the devolvement of the State of Israel.

By late 1983, and after another general election defeat, Labour radicalism had receded considerably from its position to command significant support and influence.⁶⁰⁴ Under the new moderate left-wing leadership of Neil Kinnock, a radical process of internal reforms gradually steered the party back to a centre-leftist position. As a consequence of the left's decline and Kinnock's reforms, Labour abandoned its pro-Palestinian policy; but significantly, did not revert to its traditional pro-political Zionist position; instead, it gravitated towards a more equitable position as the gradual shift from the traditional pro-political Zionist position came to a conclusion of sorts in 1994.

These seismic radical *internal determinants* were accompanied and assisted by a series of seminal *external determinants*: the electoral decline of the Israeli Labor Party and the rise of Likud, Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon and its repressive response to the *Intifadah*. The period concluded with the first Gulf War (1990-1991), which proved to be the catalyst in returning Labor to power in Israel and the opportunity for Labour in Britain to definitively address the *essential dilemma* in the wake of the Oslo and Washington Accords (1993).

Labour's Lurch to the Left

The 1979 General Election defeat prompted the left and far-left-wings of the party to capture control of Labour's supreme decision and policy-making body - the National Executive Committee (NEC). The election of Michael Foot, a key left-winger, as party leader in 1980 further assisted this rise in the influence of the left-wing, which was to be felt across Labour hierarchy and policy-making forums (Conference, Constituency Parties and Ruling Bodies), and mirrored in the trades union movement (its greatest manifestation coming in the form of the left-wing's influence upon the unions' 'Bloc Vote').

⁶⁰⁴ Although Neil Kinnock's efforts to reduce the effectiveness of the far-left were relatively successful, Kinnock and Labour's struggle with left-wing radicalism continued throughout the 1980s. See: Hayter, Dianne (2005) *Fightback!: Labour's Traditional Right in the 1970s and 1980s*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press)

It is claimed that in British politics 'Prime Ministers always run their own foreign policy, a fact of British political history which often makes the Foreign Secretary's one of the more difficult of the great offices of state to hold.'⁶⁰⁵ However, as the academic Eric Shaw claims, the reality in both foreign and domestic policy affairs, and particularly prior to the reform of the decision/policy-making mechanism in the late 1970s and early 1980s, was often more complicated, with equally complicated consequences:

'Constitutionally, Labour was a highly pluralist organisation with decision-making powers apportioned amongst a variety of institutions: the leader, the shadow cabinet or front bench, the NEC, and, as possessors of large blocks of votes at Conference and the right to elect the majority of NEC members, the larger unions'.....In fact, for most of Labour's history, the party was dominated by its parliamentary leadership whose rule rested upon right-wing majorities in all key institutions which gave rise to a system of integrated organisational control.'⁶⁰⁶

And that furthermore:

'After 1979 this disintegrated and bereft of the powers which it had only enjoyed by virtue of its grip over the NEC, the leadership lacked the constitutional authority to block the adoption of policies to which it was fundamentally opposed. It was by exercising its right to formulate policy statements and present them to Conference that the left NEC helped steer such controversial policies as unilateralism, withdrawal from the EC . . . through Conference.'⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰⁵ Rentoul, John (2001: 420) *Tony Blair: Prime Minister*, (London: Warner)

⁶⁰⁶ Shaw, Eric (1994: 17) *The Labour Party Since 1979: Crisis and Transformation*, (London: Routledge)

⁶⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, (1994: 17)

Reform of the decision and policy-making mechanism, in particular the composition of the NEC and the breaking down of the predominance of the leadership also gave greater influence to the Constituency and Local Parties - often called Labour's 'grass-roots.' As a result, in a few constituencies, left-wing activists found a forum from which to advance their more radical policies with all their related facilities and access to the party conference and contents of the manifesto. In addition to the local parties these left-wing activists directed much of their agenda and influence via the vehicle of the trade union membership and its supreme body the Trades Union Council (TUC). This occurred most notably in London, the West Midlands, Merseyside and Dundee. Labour MP - Austin Mitchell⁶⁰⁸ - summarises the mechanism used by the left-wing to influence Labour Party policy:

'Policy would be formulated through the wishes of the activists coming up in resolutions passed by Conference, then welded into a Manifesto, not by the parliamentary Party which had abused its independence, but by a National Executive dependent on the Party activists. That manifesto would then become a binding mandate.'⁶⁰⁹

Having secured the leading positions in the party, and captured a majority of the seats on the NEC, the left-wing introduced a raft of radical policies in foreign affairs. These included: unilateral nuclear disarmament; the withdrawal from the EEC and NATO; a more pro-active anti-apartheid stance; and a reduction in ties with the United States. However, as a result in part of some ill-judged policies on the Falklands campaign, Labour suffered a second electoral defeat in 1983, which led to the departure of Michael Foot following the earlier departure of what were considered to be some of the finest intellectual minds of a generation (Shirley Williams, David Owen and Bill Rodgers)⁶¹⁰ in 1981, an additional major factor in Labour's 1983 defeat.⁶¹¹

⁶⁰⁸ Austin Mitchell (b.1934) MP: (Great Grimsby, 1977-present)

⁶⁰⁹ Shaw, Eric (1994: 24) *quoting*, Austin Mitchell, (1983: 37) *Four Years in the Death of the Labour Party*, (London: Methuen)

⁶¹⁰ Williams, Owen and Rodgers were joined by Roy Jenkins who had ceased to be a Labour MP in 1977 and left the party in 1981; known collectively as the 'Gang of Four' they founded the Social Democratic Party (SDP) (1981-1988).

The new leader, Neil Kinnock, and the coterie of moderate left-wingers, introduced a series of internal reforms to moderate and modernize the party. The extensive network of sub-committees, specialists and advisors which had orbited the NEC (and infused it with left-wing and far-left-wing inclinations) was removed, and a more streamlined and tightly organised system of joint Shadow Cabinet-NEC committees was put in its place. This gave the appearance of a partnership, but in actual fact, these reforms - as they were intended - returned authority to the leadership and the front bench. 'The outcome by the end of the 1980s was a policy-making community and a set of policy practices of a character radically different from the previous decade.'⁶¹²

Labour's lurch to the left and the subsequent return to the centre-left can be understood as a crucial *internal determinant* in determining the *basis* and *nature* of relations between Labour and Israel during this period. The ascendancy to the leadership of the Labour Party of the pro-Israel figure Michael Foot in 1980 seemed to assure the continuation of the party's pro-Israel policy position, which had extended from Hugh Gaitskell in the 1950s and continued via Wilson (1963-1976) and Callaghan (1976-1979). As both *internal* and *external determinants* would emerge and combine, it was under his leadership that Labour came to adopt some of the most pro-Palestinian policies in the party's history. These policies were not only

⁶¹¹ The archetypal 'New Left' Labour figure - Ken Livingstone - speaking in 1987 claims the origins of the New Left arose from what he sees as the failures of the 1960s: 'When I joined the Labour Party in March 1969, it was one of the few recorded instances of a rat climbing on board a sinking ship. I was swimming against the tide of disillusionment. All the high hopes of Labour's 1964 General Election victory had been squandered by the incompetence of Harold Wilson's first government [1964-1970]. Wilson's support for the American bombing of Vietnam, racist immigration legislation, as well as anti-trade union laws had triggered an exodus from the Labour Party. The International Socialists (now the Socialist Workers' Party), the Socialist Labour League (now the Workers' Revolutionary Party) and a whole range of single-issue groups such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, all gained from Labour's loss.' Ken Livingstone (1987: 11), *If Voting Changed Anything They'd Abolish It*, Chapter 1, *Lambeth Lessons*, (London: Collins)

⁶¹² Shaw, Eric (1994: 160)

diametrically opposed to those of Foot's predecessors but place an unprecedented strain on Labour-political Zionist relations.

Michael Foot

Michael Foot became the Labour Party leader in October 1980 (until October 1983). As a traditional left-winger, Foot's position on the Israel-Palestinian conflict was in many ways a classic representation of several parliamentary and demographic generations: after initially rejecting political Zionism in the mid 1930s, he became a firm pro-political Zionist in the 1939-1945 period, and fervently so during the post-1945 years in the wake of the Holocaust.

Foot first came into contact with the political Zionism as a result of a 1934 visit to Palestine and through his brother, Hugh Mackintosh Foot⁶¹³ who was then the Assistant District Commissioner in Palestine (1929-1938). Hugh Foot was 'a little Solomon ruling over 300 Arab villages and a handful of Jewish settlements'⁶¹⁴ in that part of the Palestine known then as Samaria, and today as part of the Israeli Occupied Territory of the West Bank. The visit gave Michael Foot a rare opportunity to directly experience Palestine at a time of growing Palestinian-political Zionist tensions, and in the context of the burgeoning plight of Jews attempting to flee European Fascism and Nazism. As the historian Kenneth Morgan says:

'Michael quickly realized the complexities of the situation in Palestine, a region left in conflict and possible chaos of the ambiguous pledges to both communities made by Lloyd George's Government after the disastrously imprecise Balfour Declaration of 1917. But whereas brother Hugh, like most in the Colonial Service, was a warm sympathizer with the Arabs,⁶¹⁵ it was the plight of the beleaguered Jewish minority that haunted Michael all his life.'⁶¹⁶

⁶¹³ Hugh Mackintosh Foot (b.1907-d.1990) [Lord Caradon, 1964] Ambassador to the United Nations, 1964-1970

⁶¹⁴ Hoggart, Simon & Leigh, David (1981: 55) *Michael Foot: A Portrait*, Chapter 4, *Sir Stafford's Disciple*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton)

⁶¹⁵ Kenneth O. Morgan additionally notes: 'Hugh Foot himself took the strongly pro-Arab line dominant in the Foreign and Colonial Service. In the 1960s, at the UN and in Harold Wilson's

During his 1934 visit to Palestine Foot personally witnessed something of the predicament of Jewish refugees as he travelled to Palestine on a boat from the Italian port of Trieste, among what he called a 'terrified tide';⁶¹⁷ the plight of Jewish refugees became a powerful influencing force in converting many Labour and related figures to the political Zionist cause.

As his autobiography shows, it was not just the current situation of the Jewish refugees exposed to the evils of Fascism and Nazism, but the long history of Jewish suffering in Europe and beyond which impressed upon his young socialist mind and his approach to political Zionism. But significantly - and unlike so many of his contemporaries in the Labour Party - Michael Foot also possessed from the earliest stages actual experience and knowledge of the realities of Palestine, with the result that the pro-political Zionist argument that a Jewish/Zionist state in Palestine - via open Jewish immigration - would resolve what Foot termed the Jewish problem (and what became the Palestine problem), was at best questionable and at worst, fundamentally flawed, particularly in the context and his awareness that Palestine was far from 'empty.' As Foot himself says:

'One doubts whether Zionism does in fact provide a solution to the Jewish problem. If this is the meaning of Zionism, there will be little hope of peace and no secure future for the Jews in a country in which neither the British nor the Jews will in the last resort have the dominant voice.'⁶¹⁸

government, he was passionately pro-Palestinian. In 1967 he largely drafted UN Resolution 242, which for the first time attempted to check perceived Israeli aggressive incursions and settlements over the West Bank and Jordan. When Hugh died in 1990, Palestinian Arab flags were draped over his coffin, at the request of his son Paul [Foot - the journalist].' Morgan, Kenneth O. (2007: 49)

⁶¹⁶ Ibid., (2007: 38) Chapter 2, *Cripps to Beaverbrook 1934-1940*

⁶¹⁷ Hoggart, Simon & Leigh, David (1981: 55) Chapter 4, *Sir Stafford's Disciple*

⁶¹⁸ Jones, Mervyn (1994: 33) *Michael Foot*, Chapter 2, *The Making of a Socialist*, quoting, Michael Foot, Review of Henry Mond [Lord Melchett], *Thy Neighbour 1936*, (London: Victor Gollancz)

Nevertheless, despite his reservations about political Zionism, and beyond the obvious humanitarian tragedy facing the Jews, as a socialist, Michael Foot felt an overwhelming solidarity with the plight of the Jewish refugees attempting to escape a Nazi and Fascist Europe. As such, his support for their efforts to escape was not only compatible with his socialist principles, but obligatory. However, beyond the urgent situation of the Jewish refugees and his awareness of the realities in Palestine, Michael Foot acknowledges the ideological contradiction arising from the *common origins, shared socialist ideologies* and the influence of the *essential dilemma* when as a socialist his support of political Zionism is troubled by the inevitable negative consequences for the Palestinians, as he states:

‘We have another and older tradition which it would be perilous to betray - the tradition of solidarity with the oppressed.’⁶¹⁹

As the full impact of the Holocaust and the plight of its survivors became all too evident, Foot’s position changed significantly. His involvement and activities increased to the extent that by 1944 he was declaring an overtly pro-political Zionist position as he vigorously campaigned on the Zionists’ behalf, and was prominent on the 1946 Anglo-Palestine Committee.⁶²⁰ The explanation for Michael Foot’s dramatic conversion from a rejection of political Zionism, to a cautious sympathiser, and eventual lifelong pro-political Zionist position is located in European and Jewish history between 1939 to 1945: the case of pre-war Jewish refugees fleeing persecution is bad enough, the systematic industrial murder of some six-million Jews was quite another. It was the difference between the two cases which - despite the awareness and contradictions arising from Palestine - made the transformation for Michael Foot and many of his Labour colleagues from questioning non-committals to staunch pro-political Zionists. The election of Labour to government in July 1945 had raised pro-political Zionist expectations, expectations Michael Foot shared. As Morgan states:

⁶¹⁹ Ibid., (1994: 33) Chapter 2, *The Making of a Socialist*

⁶²⁰ The Committee was chaired by Israel Sieff (Managing Director, Marks & Spencer) and included Frank Owen (former Liberal MP and journalist), Kingsley Martin (journalist), David Astor (news paper publisher) and Lord Pakenham (Earl of Longford) [b.1905-d.2001], the Prominent Labour minister.

‘Michel Foot was among those who hoped that a potentially pro-Jewish Labour government would begin a new departure after the long saga of bitterness following the Balfour Declaration in 1917. But he was to be horrified by [Ernest] Bevin’s policy.’⁶²¹

Foot directed his consternation at Bevin’s policies towards the Zionists using his strongest weapon - his writing, - as he co-authored the pamphlet *A Palestine Munich* (1946)⁶²² in which he and other left-wing Labour and relate figures advocated Jewish immigration up to Palestine absorptive capacity. Morgan describes that in terms of convincing clarity the publication as ‘the most cogent statement by pro-Jewish Labour representatives yet written.’⁶²³ However, and as with a series of subsequent pamphlets, these efforts afforded little if any impact in reversing Labour’s policy under Ernest Bevin and Clement Attlee.

The ultimate failure of Bevin’s Palestine policy and the establishment of the State of Israel in May 1948 ‘delighted’⁶²⁴ Foot. He became staunch friends with colleagues in the Israel Labor Party, such Teddy Kollek (later Mayor of Jerusalem) and with Zionist writers like Arthur Koestler, Jon Kimche, Evelyn Anderson and Tosco Fyvel, who were employed, as was Foot, on the leftist journal *Tribune*.^{625 626}

From 1945 until the late 1970s Michael Foot - as with many on the left-wing - retained his pro-Zionist credentials. In the case of Foot these were only somewhat modified when *Tribune* included a fierce debate within the left-wing of the party on the Israel-Palestinian issue relating to Israel’s colonisation of the Occupied

⁶²¹ Morgan, Kenneth O. (2007: 119) Chapter 4, *Loyal Oppositionist 1945-1951*

⁶²² The co-authors were Richard [Dick] Crossman and Arthur Koester.

⁶²³ Morgan, Kenneth O. (2007: 120)

⁶²⁴ Ibid., (2007: 121)

⁶²⁵ Ibid., (2007: 49-50) Chapter 2, *Cripps to Beaverbrook 1934-1940*

⁶²⁶ The *Tribune* news paper was founded in 1937 by two Left-wing Labour figures - Stafford Cripps and George Strauss - to promote an anti-Fascist non-appeasement alliance within the Labour Party among socialist and communists.

Territories. Michael Foot joined others calling on Israel to withdraw from settlements. As Morgan states quoting Foot:

‘The Jews, he felt, “had wrecked their own case.”⁶²⁷

As with others in the Labour Party, the reason for this deviation as Morgan also says, have as much to do with the shift in Israeli politics away from the Israeli Labor Party to the right-wing Likud as they do with socialist ideological contradictions:

‘In any case, the sternly nationalist Likud-led administration seemed far removed from the old comradeship in the era of Ben-Gurion and the socialism of the kibbutz.’⁶²⁸

As one of the most committed pro-political Zionists of the post-1945 era, it is with more than a sense of irony that Michael Foot came to preside over the Labour Party’s most dramatic deviation in policy position since the adoption of the radically pro-political Zionist statement in 1944, when the party accepted at conference the most pro-Palestinian policy position after the capture of the NEC by the left-wing and new-left-wing in 1981.

Labour’s Left-Wing Agenda and Policies

The ascendancy of Labour’s left-wing initiated a range of policies which directly or indirectly resulted in challenges and change to Labour-Israel relations. These policies included unilateral nuclear disarmament, withdrawal from the EEC and NATO, distancing of ties with the United States and closer ties with the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc, along with a firmer and more pro-active stance against the South African Apartheid regime.

All of these changes had consequences for Labour-Israel relations: the nuclear issue came to the fore after the disclosure in 1986 that Israel had become the only country

⁶²⁷ Morgan, Kenneth O. (2007: 49-50) Chapter 2, *quoting*, Michael Foot, Interview, June 7, 2005

⁶²⁸ Ibid., (2007: 49-50)

to possess nuclear weapons in the Middle East as a result of the 'Vanunu Affair',⁶²⁹ which contrasted starkly with Labour's own anti-nuclear stance, similarly, the decision to distance British policy from that of the United States across a number of strategic subjects and regions - a shift that began for the left-wing after the Vietnam era of US foreign policy (c.1962-1975) - put further water between Israel and Labour policy positions, particularly in light of the fact that, since 1967 and Israel's sweeping victory over Egypt, Syria and Jordan, the United States had concentrated on supporting Israel in a largely non-aligned region. Additionally, Israel's support in arms and technical advice for the Nicaraguan Contras and its close affiliation to the Apartheid regime in South Africa were also at odds with Labour's left-wing. The proposal to sever membership of the EEC threatened to leave Labour adrift from the then dominant pro-Israel position led by the influence of the West Germans as a legacy of the Holocaust and the 1972 Olympics attack; and finally, the decision to foster closer association with the USSR and Eastern Europe brought Labour within the influence of countries and political regimes that had been pro-Palestinian since the 1950s and 1960s in terms of their sponsorship of the nominally secular socialist PLO and its ruling body, the Palestine National Council (PNC).

However, the inclusion of these radical left-wing policies in Labour's 1983 General Election manifesto - what Gerald Kaufman⁶³⁰ called the 'longest suicide note in history' - proved to be not only deeply unpopular with the British electorate, but resulted in the second general election defeat in a row, and the departure of Michael Foot in 1983. With the election of the more moderate left-wing figure of Neil Kinnock, the party leadership embarked on a modernization and reform programme with the primary goal of seeking to return Labour as a party of government. This sequence of events marked both a decline in the power of the left-wing at all levels of

⁶²⁹ The revelations by Mordechai Vanunu (b.1954) a Moroccan born Jew and Israeli citizen (1963) disclosed Israel's nuclear weapons secrets in the Sunday Times (05.10.1986). An investigation report by the BBC Newsnight programme (09.03.2006) disclosed that Harold Wilson's government (1964-1970) supplied Israel with plutonium, heavy water and additional technical intelligence and material assistance in 1966.

⁶³⁰ Gerald Kaufman (b.1930) MP: (Manchester Ardwick, 1970-1983), (Manchester Gorton, 1983-present)

the party, a factor that was assisted and reflected by the isolation of the far-left Trotskyites like Dave Nellist in 1991, and left-wing radicals in London, Merseyside and Glasgow such as Ken Livingstone,⁶³¹ Eric Heffer⁶³² and George Galloway.⁶³³ The shift of Labour to the centre-left also marked the decline of support from the left-wing for a purely pro-Palestinian policy. However, what was really important in terms of the legacies of the brief but dramatic control of the party by the left-wing, and which reflected the wider gradualist deviation process that had been increasing evident from 1967 and 1973, was the fact that Labour did not revert in either policy or the general party consensus to a pro-Israel position, a position that had always essentially been underpinned by the pro-political Zionist instincts of individuals; instead the party eventually settled under the guidance of Kinnock's pragmatism and reforms to adopt a neutralist stance.

Furthermore, as the influence of ongoing conflict in Lebanon continued and the intervention of significant additional *external determinant* in the shape of the *Intifadah* occurred, as the 1980s progressed Labour's new even-handed position was further secured among a new leadership epitomised by Neil Kinnock, Denis Healey, Roy Hattersley and Gerald Kaufman. This was assisted by the fact that Labour was not only taking a more moderate policy stance on the Israel-Palestine issue, but also because Labour figures were becoming increasingly questioning of their own pro-Israel stance in the wake of the emerging often irrefutable evidence of Israeli policies

⁶³¹ Kenneth "Ken" Livingstone (b.1945) MP: (Brent East, 1987-2001)

⁶³² Eric Heffer (b.1922-d.1991) MP: (Liverpool Walton, 1964-1991)

⁶³³ Despite some very public spats between the Labour leadership and the left-wing, the attempt to purge Labour of left-wing influence was far from decisive: Dave Nellist (b.1952) MP: (Coventry SE, 1983-1992) and Terence "Terry" Fields (b.1937-d.2008) MP: (Liverpool-Broadgreen, 1983-1992) were both eventually expelled from the Labour Party in 1991; Pat Wall (Bradford N), an MP with Militant connections, was elected in 1987 and remained a Labour MP until his death in 1990. Ken Livingstone was not expelled from the party until he ran for Mayor of London in 2000. Eric Heffer was dismissed from the post of Minister of State for Social Security in 1975 for speaking against continued membership of the EEC in the commons, but remained an MP until his death in 1991. George Galloway (b.1954) MP: (Glasgow-Hillhead, 1987-2003), (Glasgow Kelvin, 1997-2005) was expelled in 2003 for opposing the Iraq war.

in an instant media age and the contradictions this unavoidably posed for socialist as a consequence of the *essential dilemma*.

The Labour Party's move from an overtly pro-Palestinian policy to a more moderate position was mostly driven by Kinnock. It was not however the result of his undoubted pro-Israel sympathies, but rather his abiding conviction that if Labour were to form a government again in the face of two successive defeats (1979 and 1983) it must reform and modernize; this meant abandoning the dogma of socialism and the excesses of left-wing and far-left-wing idealism by adopting the social democratic values and principles of the liberal pragmatist. Born in 1942 Neil Kinnock was the first Labour leader of the post-1945 and post-Holocaust generation. Although Kinnock possessed a detailed awareness of the Holocaust and its undoubted significance to Labour-Israel relations, he also had some understanding and sympathy with the Palestinian position. It was with these two perspectives that he attempted to apply his slightly more detached and entirely pragmatic approach when it came to generating a consensus and formulation a policy position.

External Determinants in the 1980s

As so often in the history of Labour-political Zionist relations, the most influential *external determinants* in the 1980s arose from conflict and war. The impact upon the Labour Party of Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the subsequent and related Palestinian *Intifadah* in 1987 were seminal in expressing the *essential dilemma* and accounting for the shift by Labour from its traditional pro-political Zionism/Israel position to a policy position of neutrality by 1994.

Israel's conduct against civilians and the non-military infrastructure in Lebanon, graphically displayed for the first time in frequent television broadcasts, had the effect of undermining much of the core Labour support for Israel, and gave added credence to Israel's critics within the party from both the centre-left and left-wing. Allegations of human rights and international law violations established new parameters for debate among Labour figures. The atrocities committed by Israel in all previous conflicts and wars which might have affected Labour-Israel relations earlier remained largely unknown, unrecorded or lost in the later history of the Palestinian-Zionist struggle. But Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon accompanied by the international

media became the first 'TV War' in the Arab-Israel conflict; the intense media coverage adding to the political quagmire facing Israel leading to the analogy of Lebanon being Israel's Vietnam as it took till May 2000 to extract Israeli forces.

Although Israel won the military war, the civilian death toll, estimated to be between 15,000 and 20,000 resulting from the deliberate targeting of non-military targets like residential areas, hospitals, schools and electricity supplies using weapons prohibited by international law, was compounded by the revelations that Israel had orchestrated and facilitated the massacre of hundreds of Palestinian civilians in the refugee camps of *Sabra* and *Chatila* brought international condemnation and a rare United Nations rebuke for Israel.⁶³⁴ These events were to have a profound influence upon Labour-Israel relations, the policy position of Labour and the party consensus, and served to accelerate Labour's move towards securing a position of greater neutrality via the pro-Palestinian surge in the party's support for a bi-national secular state of Palestine expressed at the party conference in September 1982.

Redefining Labour's Foreign Policy

By the early 1980s the surge in left-wing idealism had been codified in a Labour discussion Document *A Socialist Foreign Policy* produced in 1981.⁶³⁵ The introductory notes explicitly acknowledge the dilemmas for Labour represented by the Arab/Palestinian-Israeli conflict for Labour's Middle East policy:

'The Middle East poses a particular problem for those seeking to understand Labour's policy in left/right terms. Divisions representing often strongly held

⁶³⁴ See: MacBride, Sean (1983) *Israel in Lebanon: Report of the International Commission to Enquire into reported violations of International Law by Israel during its invasion of the Lebanon: August 28, 1982-November 29, 1982*, (London: Ithaca Press)

⁶³⁵ *Labour Party Discussion Document*, September 1981, p.25, *Socialism in the 80s: A Socialist Foreign Policy*, Section 4, *Middle East*, (London: Labour Party), the *Foreword* by Ron Hayward (General Secretary) notes the discussion pamphlet was produced in preparation for the Labour conference (November 1981). It was not a comprehensive or definitive statement of party policy, but a record of recent party actions and proposals for further discussion, leading to the preparation of a detailed Socialist Foreign Policy for the 1982 Labour programme.

views on the Arab-Israeli conflict do not conform to the classic left/right divisions in the Party. Both points of view present important interpretations of a basic socialist belief in the right of national self-determination and both present conflicting interpretations of the way in which the conflict relates to the international struggle for socialism.⁶³⁶

The evolution of Labour's policy positions over its own history are also described, including the transition from a pro-political Zionist policy:

'Long past are the days when the Labour Party advocated a policy which, in the words of Chaim Weizmann, Israel's first President, 'went far beyond our own official programme.'⁶³⁷

The document recounted how the Labour Party had, since 1967, developed a more even-handed approach. Labour's Programme 1976 endorsed UN Resolution, 242, as a basis for a settlement and demanded that the rights of the Palestinian people be recognized and that they be fully involved in any settlement of the conflict. The 1979 General Election Manifesto had been yet more explicitly in favour of Palestinian self-determination.

'We shall work for a negotiated settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict which would ensure the right of all parties to achieve national self-determination and to live in a homeland within secure and recognised borders.'⁶³⁸

This latest position was reflected in the 1981 document:

'In practice only one of these two peoples has managed to realise its aspiration of national self-determination in this territory, that is the Israeli-Jewish nation. The aim must therefore be to accommodate the aspirations of the Palestinian-

⁶³⁶ Ibid., September 1981, p.25

⁶³⁷ Ibid., September 1981, p.25

⁶³⁸ Ibid., September, 1981, p.27

Arab people, but not to do so in a way that would prejudice the rights of the Israeli Jews.’⁶³⁹

The NEC sub-committee ultimately proposed that the party support the adoption of the ‘Palestinian mini state option’ - a position which was accepted by the 1982 party conference:

‘It is proposed that the Palestinians should establish an independent state within the current Occupied Territories. It is an option which upholds the principles of UN Resolution 242, guaranteeing territorial integrity and political independence and rejecting the validity of territorial conquest.’⁶⁴⁰

In further contrast to 1981, the fact that the 1982 party conference was held against the backdrop of Israel’s invasion of Lebanon might - in large part at least - account for this significant reversal of previous pro-political Zionist sympathies. Evidence of the influence from the ongoing conflict exists in the NEC’s opening motion on the Middle East:

‘This conference condemns the Israeli invasion of Lebanon with its horrific toll of death and destruction. Conference believes that the time has come for the Labour Party to state unequivocally its support for the fundamental rights of the Palestinians and its condemnation of the continuing pattern of Israeli aggression, and calls on the National Executive Committee to pursue this policy through the Socialist International.’⁶⁴¹

The subject of Israel’s conduct in Lebanon continues to feature clearly in the subsequent debate as illustrated by the contribution of Labour related figure, Councillor Ken Fagan which is worth quoting extensively:

⁶³⁹ Ibid., September, 1981, p.28

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid., September, 1981, p.29

⁶⁴¹ *Report of the Annual Conference of the Labour Party, Middle East*, NEC Statement on the Middle East, Composite 27, September 29, 1982, p.131, Winter Gardens, Blackpool, (London: Labour Party)

‘Abba Eban, the ex-foreign minister of Israel, complained a few weeks ago before the hideous massacres at Sabra and S[C]hatila of an absence of humility, compassion and restraint in the Israeli government, that a new vocabulary was being used by cabinet ministers - verbs such as ‘to crush’, ‘to liquidate’ and ‘to wipe out.’ Prime minister [Menachem] Begin referred to the Palestinians as two-legged animals and he pledged to cleanse Lebanon of them. Ariel Sharon⁶⁴² stated that they intended to ‘purify’ the refugee camps. This phraseology has a chilling familiarity, reminding us of the atrocities in Europe forty years ago.

There is something else which has a familiar ring to it: that the Palestinian people are a nation in search of a homeland. We can no longer ignore the natural justice which demands that the Palestinian people are entitled to their liberty, to their self-government and their independent statehood.’⁶⁴³

Fagan continues:

‘As we have always opposed British colonialism in the past, so we must also now resist Israeli territorial expansionism. Just as early Zionism was committed to positive action and dedicated struggle, these are now the ideas of the Palestine Liberation Organisation.’⁶⁴⁴

Aside from the open acknowledgement of Israel’s colonialist character, the speech was important in the degree to which it distanced the Trades Union-backed NEC from the Israeli leadership whilst endorsing the PLO. In a complete reversal of the *currency of language* traditionally used by Labour and British politicians to portray the

⁶⁴² Ariel Sharon (b.1928) Israeli PM [Likud]: 2001-2006; Defence Minister, 1982-1983.

⁶⁴³ *Report of the Annual Conference of the Labour Party, Middle East*, NEC Statement on the Middle East, Composite 27, Ken Fagan (Dundee City Council) September 29, 1982, p.131-132

⁶⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, September 29, 1982, p.131-132

‘Arab/s’ and Palestinians as Nazi and Fascists, Ted Knight (Labour Lambeth Borough Councillor) went much further in his criticisms of Israel:

‘Comrades, when the world was shaken by the horror of the massacre of Palestinian civilians, women, children and babies in the camps of Shatila, a parallel was drawn with the atrocities of the Nazis in the Forties. But these were again atrocities carried out by Nazis - the Falangist Nazis, the Falangist movement which prides itself on modelling its practice and philosophy on their hero Adolf Hitler.

But this time it was Nazis carrying out their murders under the protection of Israeli guns with the agreement of the Israeli army and with the connivance of the Israeli government. The outrage that took place in those camps has followed very logically the policy that has been conducted by the Israeli government in the Lebanon, a policy of genocide against the Palestinian peoples.’⁶⁴⁵

In the face of such a forceful NEC anti-political Zionist position, it was left to veteran pro-political Zionist and left-wing MP Ian Mikardo and related figure Sam Jacobs of *Poale Zion* to present the case for the Israeli Labor Party. Their approach seems to be based on seeking to reassert the socialist affiliations with the Israel Labor Party as an alternative to Likud. As Ian Mikardo says in the following:

‘I have one or two reservations about the NEC statement which is before you. - it calls for recognition of the PLO without requiring them to abandon their aim of destroying Israel by force. The emergency resolution uses in section (4) [Labour’s support for the establishment of a democratic, secular state of Palestine] a formula which has now been used for some years as a euphemism for the total destruction of Israel. So I could not vote for that.’⁶⁴⁶

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid., *Beirut Massacre*, Emergency Resolution 4, Ted Knight (Norwood) September 29, 1982, p.133

⁶⁴⁶ Ian Mikardo (Bethnal Green & Bow), September 29, 1982, p.134

Mikardo concludes:

‘In the two minutes left it is impossible to comment meaningfully on all the many complexities of the problems of the Israelis and the Arabs. . . .we should identify ourselves with and support the great movement of protest and opposition to the actions of Begin and Sharon which has spread like wildfire throughout the whole of Israel and has recaptured the idealism of Israel’s pioneers. The labor movement in Israel, the Labor alignment, the Official Opposition, has totally opposed by solid votes in their parliament the extension of Begin’s war aims.’⁶⁴⁷

The case made by Mikardo and Jacobs, that there was a distinction between the policies and actions of the right-wing Likud and those of the Israeli Labor Party, did not go unchallenged as another Labour Councillor, Ian Smart, asserted:

‘There is no doubt that the Israeli Labor Party is now calling for a withdrawal of Israeli troops from Beirut. But there is equally no doubt that the Israeli Labor Party supported the invasion of Lebanon. The Israeli Labor Party supported the earlier massacres at Tyre and Sidon. The Israeli Labor Party have consistently supported repression of the Palestinian people both within the state of Israel and in the Occupied Territories.’⁶⁴⁸

The points made by Smart did not find complete agreement among one of the most senior Labour figures, - Denis Healey, - the then Shadow Foreign Secretary. Although Healey did agree the following:

‘. . . the behaviour of the Begin government has led very many of Israel’s friends in the outside world and many Israelis to realise that the Palestinian people have exactly the same right to a state of their own as the people of Israel.’⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid., p.134

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid., Ian Smart (Paisley), September 29, 1982, p.136

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid., Denis Healey (Leeds East and NEC), September 29, 1982, p.136

Healey believed that the Israeli Labor Party had been forced to support the invasion of Lebanon or risk electoral 'defeat to oppose their government when it was fighting a war.'⁶⁵⁰ For Healey, as for many who took a non-partisan rather than pro-Palestinian stand, the most salient and abiding point remained that Israel was a democratic state and the British Labour Party, as a socialist party, was obliged to defend that democracy, just as surely as it promoted the equitable rights of the Palestinians.

Ultimately, the land-mark 1982 conference determined that Labour should adopt a pro-Palestinian policy position, recognising the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and the right to statehood and self-determination for Palestinians.⁶⁵¹

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid., p.137

⁶⁵¹ As with the Zionist Organisation and the Jewish Agency, a major contribution to Labour awareness and gradual shift in position towards the Palestinian perspective arose from the founding of the PLO and the PNC as both bodies provided a focus and forum for the collective national consciousness of the Palestinian Diaspora. As the academic Sayigh says, the Palestinian national movement (PLO and PNC) 'provided the political impulse and organizational dynamic in the evolution of Palestinian national identity and in the formation of parastatal institutions and a bureaucratic elite, the nucleus of government.'⁶⁵¹ Sayigh, Yezid (1997: vii) *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993, Preface*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press) And as Cobban notes: 'If, in the late 70s or the early 80s, you were to ask any Fateh leader - or come to that, any member of any other Palestinian organisation, or practically any Palestinian at all - what the resistance movement had achieved after two decades of struggle, the first answer would be to the effect that the resistance movement *had re-established the Palestinian identity* [Cobban's emphasis]. 'In the 50s,' Yasser Arafat recalled in 1979, 'John Foster Dulles used to say that the new generation of Palestinians would not even know Palestine. But they did! The group that made the [March 1978] operation against Israel were nearly all of them born outside Palestine, but they were prepared to die for it.' 'Palestine,' said Khaled al-Hassan, 'had been eliminated from the books and maps; the Palestinian people had been eliminated. The problem was called the Arab-Israeli problem: it was a border problem between states, not a question of a people whose rights had been infringed. Now there is a Palestinian people which is recognised. . . . This was our first achievement.' Cobban, Helena (1990: 245) *The Palestinian Liberation Organisation: People, Power and Politics*, Chapter 11, *The Irresistible Force and the*

Although three Labour motions were carried by conference, the NEC leadership and the delegates were actually fairly evenly divided in terms of votes cast, suggesting that the party *consensus* was more non-partisan than pro-Palestinian. It could be argued that this is evidence of the depth and breadth of pro-Israel support within the party, particularly amid the most disadvantageous of circumstances, as evidenced by the continuing placement of senior and experienced pro-Israel Labour MPs in prominent positions, notably Ian Mikardo and the party leader, Michael Foot. Nonetheless, it was clear that Labour had moved dramatically from its historic pro-Zionist/Israel policy position, even if the resulting pro-Palestinian policy was more a result of the capture by the left-wing and far-left of the NEC than as a result of the party consensus.

The Neil Kinnock Years 1983-1992

Neil Kinnock was born into a mining family in South Wales. As Robert Harris said, he laid 'claim to one of the purest working-class pedigrees a Labour leader has ever had.'⁶⁵²

Kinnock succeeded Michael Foot as Leader of the Labour Party in 1983 after a second successive general election defeat. Although the party had elected another left-wing Leader, Kinnock had become convinced that the primary lessons of the defeat were the electorate's clear rejection of a left-wing agenda and Labour's commitment to socialist orthodoxy. The leadership election itself was a defeat of the 'old-left' challenge by Tony Benn and Eric Heffer by the moderate left-wing figure of Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley of the centre/centre-right.⁶⁵³ Kinnock's leadership and

Immovable Object, quoting, Yasser Arafat, November 1979, and Khaled al-Hassan April 1983, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

⁶⁵² Harris, Robert (1984: 20) *The Making of Neil Kinnock*, Chapter 2, *The Kinnock Inheritance*, (London: Faber & Faber)

⁶⁵³ Roy Hattersley (b.1932) MP: (Birmingham Sparkbrook, 1964-1997) is another Labour figure with a deeply Christian background. After Labour lost the 1970 he conveyed a not untypical Labour approach to foreign affairs: 'My gloom was intensified by Harold Wilson's insistence that I should become the party's Deputy Foreign Affairs Spokesman. Working again for Denis Healey was some consolation - but not enough for being forced to devote my

Hattersley's deputy leadership (1983-1992) were widely viewed as the 'dream ticket.'⁶⁵⁴

On assuming the leadership Neil Kinnock commenced a 'root and branch' reform and modernisation programme which restricted and sacrificed many of Labour's 'sacred cows.' A reform of the decision and policy-making body and branches of the party machinery (NEC, constituencies, conference) were accompanied by a distancing from trades unions, epitomised by Kinnock's stance during the miners' strike (1984-1985) and the breakdown of the union bloc vote; the extraction of the far-left 'Militant Tendency' and the Trotskyites - Dave Nellist and Terry Fields were eventually removed by 1991 - signalled the depth and determination of Kinnock's applied pragmatism.⁶⁵⁵

In terms of Labour's relations with Israel, Kinnock was initially very much the product of a post-1967 parliamentary generation. As Labour MP Donald Anderson⁶⁵⁶ says, positions towards Israel were changing 'partly a reflection of greater parochialism . . . and partly because of the decline in the number of Jewish MPs . . . and the demise of those who in their earlier formative years were influenced by the Holocaust.'⁶⁵⁷ Kinnock's account of the understanding of history that shaped his positions and that of Labour contains many noted aspects classically derived from *common origins* of socialism in Britain and political Zionism more generally. However and similarly, as with many Labour figures, Kinnock came to be influenced

life to a subject which I had little or no interest. What was worse, I knew that I would have to make constant visits to distant countries of which I knew nothing.' Roy Hattersley (1995: 92) *Who Goes Home? Scenes from Political Life*, Chapter 5, (London: Little, Brown & Company)

⁶⁵⁴ Westlake, Martin & St. John, Ian (2001: 237) *Kinnock: The Biography*, Part Three, *Leader - Early Years (1983-7)*, (London: Little, Brown and Company)

⁶⁵⁵ Peter Taaffe, editor of *Militant*, and Ted Grant, founder of Militant Tendency, were expelled from the Labour Party in 1983 and Kinnock fiercely attacked Militant at the 1985 party conference. Expulsions continued throughout the 1980s.

⁶⁵⁶ Donald Anderson (b.1939) Baron Anderson of Swansea 2005. MP: (Monmouth, 1966-1970), (Swansea East, 1974-2005)

⁶⁵⁷ Anderson, Donald (09.03.2006: 1) *Letter: Anderson-Nelson*, House of Lords

by a sequence of *external* and *internal determinates* that moved him from a pro-Israel position to a pro-neutralist position by 1994. He cites his early pro-Israel interest thus:

‘My generation was still bewildered and outraged by what the Nazis had done to the Jews and what Stalin continued to do to the Jews.’⁶⁵⁸

And on the broader Middle East, Kinnock states:

‘I think probably my first consciousness of the issue was Suez [1956], as it was for a lot of people of my generation. From then on, I think I probably had a stronger inclination towards the besieged Israeli democratic state run by a Labor government, not just at the top, but of a co-operative, social democratic, democratic socialist application at the bottom, solidified with a degree of solidarity. Idealism? Yes, no question about that. And then when I started really encountering Israelis from the early 1960s onwards, largely as a consequence of university associations, personal friendships came into it as well.’⁶⁵⁹

Kinnock located both himself, and his party in much the same way as had previous pro-political Zionist Labour leaders:

‘It existed from the start between the Labour Party and the Israeli Labor Party. Good strong relationship. No Labour Party belligerence or resentment towards the Palestinians, but the attitude founded on two things: one, the strong engagement of Jews in the British Labour Party and the social democratic movement generally in Europe; secondly, the establishment of a democratic Jewish state. And therefore the view was of a beleaguered social democracy applying the co-operative principle to an unprecedented degree in the kibbutzim movement, therefore in policy terms essential to maintain Israel.’⁶⁶⁰

⁶⁵⁸ Kinnock, Neil (30.01.2004: 8) *Interview: Kinnock-Nelson*, European Commission, London

⁶⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, (30.01.2004: 1)

⁶⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, (30.01.2004: 1)

With regards to the Palestinians, Kinnock says Labour's understanding came from two sources: 'from Israel itself (and elements within the Israeli socialist parties, *Mapia* and *Mapam*), and later the Israeli Labor Party;' and also from 'the experiences of British servicemen and others who had been in mandate Palestine and had witnessed their dispossession.'⁶⁶¹ That the Palestinians had *and were* continuing to suffer Kinnock had no doubts, but to no extent did this recognition in any way diminish the *basis* of Labour-political Zionist relations. Kinnock attributes much of his understanding of Israel-Palestinian issues to an older and more experienced generation of Labour MPs, notably Denis Healey and Gerald Kaufman (Shadow Spokesperson Foreign Affairs, 1987-1992):

'I was very, very fortunate in that my first foreign affairs spokesperson was Denis Healey, who understood the need for that even-handedness, but without compromising on the support for Israel as a social democracy, and without compromising on sympathy for the Palestinian people as victims.'⁶⁶²

He added:

'[Kaufman] obviously a working class Jew from Manchester, immensely bright, and someone who for most if not all of his political life, right through to the early 1980s, had been someone who would not have flinched if you had called him a Zionist. I do not think he was, but he would not be outraged at being described as a Zionist.'⁶⁶³

It is certainly significant for Neil Kinnock that his leadership coincided with the fact that Kaufman had become 'personally disillusioned'⁶⁶⁴ with Israeli policy, as indeed had sections of the Labour Party. Although Denis Healey had always been a pragmatist neutralist figure, Kaufman was a traditional staunch pro-political

⁶⁶¹ Ibid., (30.01.2004: 2)

⁶⁶² Ibid., (30.01.2004: 2)

⁶⁶³ Ibid., (30.01.2004: 2)

⁶⁶⁴ Edmunds, June (May, 1998: 114)

Zionist/Israel figure. The son of a Jewish East European refugee tailor, Kaufman had become increasingly disillusioned with Israel's policies in the Occupied Territories despite his life-long political Zionist sympathies. For Kinnock, Kaufman's disaffection had a particular authenticity, grounded as it was in an intolerance of the use of violence for political purposes and a concern with the civilized protection of innocent victims.

One strand of Neil Kinnock's evasive but pragmatist approach was the emphasis given to economic development and financial investment as a component and/or prerequisite to a political resolution of the conflict. This approach has its origins in the 'Rita Hinden' school of thought and policy reforms of Labour post-colonial era (see: chapter 2), but has since become the backbone of the approach to modern conflicts from South Africa to Northern Ireland. When Kinnock drew analogies between the Palestinians' predicament in Gaza and that of Black South Africans in the 'Soweto, and Alexander townships,'⁶⁶⁵ he was pointing towards the inherent prejudices of the relevant regimes, as much as he was to the need to generate a 'reasonable social infrastructure' and 'some economic opportunity'⁶⁶⁶ in order to resolve the conflicts in question. This also enabled him to diversely apportion the blame somewhat for that predicament:

'As Shimon [Peres] has always argued, if whatever Arab support is available to the Palestinians was coming in the form of housing, roads, education, the development of a port in Gaza, and the acquirement of the expertise to make "flowers grow in the desert" then they would be making a real subscription ultimately to peace.'⁶⁶⁷

While there is ample evidence that Kinnock finds Israeli policies towards the Palestinians unacceptable, he evidently sees, or chooses to see, the conflict as essentially one of economic deprivation resulting in the poverty and despair that manifests into political and religious extremism and violence. Kinnock suggests, in a

⁶⁶⁵ Kinnock, Neil (30.01.2004: 3)

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid., (30.01.2004: 5)

⁶⁶⁷ Ibid., (30.01.2004: 6)

classic Hindenist scenario, that a resolution towards peace could be found if ‘an economic programme to give those [Palestinian] kids jobs’⁶⁶⁸ were introduced, as opposed to advocating the cessation of settlement building or the establishment of a Palestinian State.

The First Palestinian *Intifadah* 1987-1993

If Israel’s 1982 invasion of Lebanon was the first Arab/Palestinian-Israel ‘TV’- ‘media’ war, then the first Palestinian *Intifadah* was the second. The conflict between Israel and the Palestinian civilians of the Occupied Territories (West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip) erupted twenty years after Israel captured the territories in 1967. In that time, Israeli settlement policies - under both Israeli Labor and Likud governments - had increased dramatically from none in 1967 to 50 in 1977 and to over 200 in 1987. The related dispossession and repression of the Palestinians in order to facilitate Israel’s colonisation and expansionist policies eventually erupted into open civil rebellion. The almost daily reporting and disturbing imagery of civilian casualties and general lack of progress in peace negotiations affected many sections of the party and made for concerned commentary in the House of Commons.⁶⁶⁹

In the midst of the *Intifadah*, in February 1988, against the backdrop of the thirtieth anniversary of the Israeli occupation, and five years into his leadership of the Labour Party, Neil Kinnock undertook what was described by one commentator as a ‘politically sensitive’⁶⁷⁰ tour of the Middle East. The tour included the ‘most controversial’⁶⁷¹ aspect, Kinnock’s first visit to Israel and the Occupied Territories, where two months previously the *Intifadah* had begun on December 7th, 1987.⁶⁷² During this visit he came face-to-face with the contradictions posed by his own

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid., (30.01.2004: 2-3)

⁶⁶⁹ See: Nellist, Dave (22.12.1988) *Israel*, Hansard, col. 660; Kaufman, Gerald (30.11.1988) *Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs*, Hansard, col. 691; and Cohen, Harry (17.01.1989) *Tunis (Ministerial Visit)*, Hansard, col. 158. Harry Cohen (b.1949) MP: (Leyton, 1983-1997), (Leyton and Wanstead, 1997-present).

⁶⁷⁰ Westlake, Martin & St. John, Ian (2001: 462)

⁶⁷¹ Ibid., (2001: 462)

⁶⁷² The tour included a meeting with Egypt’s President Hosni Mubarak, Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan and Prime Minister, Mr Zaid al-Rifai.

socialist ideology in contrast to the realities of Labor and Likud policies, and the consequences for the Palestinians. Kinnock says he was invited by the 'Labor Party of Israel and the *Histadrut*.'⁶⁷³ He was accompanied by Denis Healey (Shadow Foreign Affairs Spokesperson) and Glenys Kinnock, witnessing at first hand the violence and counter-violence in the Occupied Territories of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Nablus. The visit clearly made an impression. Westlake says 'Kinnock was angered by the conditions he encountered in the Palestinian refugee camps', and in particular, by 'intensive [Israeli] military presence.' As Kinnock left Gaza he announced his thoughts in unequivocal language to the waiting media corps:

'It is a vast slum. It is hell. There is no doubt about it.'⁶⁷⁴

Although Kinnock adds with more than a qualifying sense of his intuitive pragmatism:

'But you know anybody who has been to those camps will come away more pro-Palestinian than when they went in, there is no doubt about that, and that even includes quite a lot of Israelis.'⁶⁷⁵

The situation in the West Bank generated similar condemnation from the Labour leader, especially in reference to the civilian casualties of live ammunition. As Kinnock states:

'The *Intifadah* was still at the stage of kids throwing stones. I went to a hospital in Nablus [West Bank]; in the operating theatre they were obviously taking 2.2 rounds out of the buttocks and back of a youngster at a time when the Israeli Army on the streets were not armed, - they [the Israeli army] were carrying base-ball bats and pick-axe handles, - and some of the Officers had

⁶⁷³ Kinnock, Neil (30.01.2004: 2)

⁶⁷⁴ Westlake, Martin & St. John, Ian (2001: 463)

⁶⁷⁵ Kinnock, Neil (30.01.2004: 6)

2.2 practice pistols, so it was obvious where they had come from and come against orders; the Israeli Army had no policy to shoot.’⁶⁷⁶

Despite Kinnock’s political allegiances to the Israeli Labor Party, and the many close personal associations he had with Israeli Labor figures, he was moved to make a strong public criticism of the situation for Palestinians under Israeli rule. At a dinner held by the Israeli Labor section of the Israeli Cabinet, Neil Kinnock says he had a ‘wonderful row with Yitzhak Rabin’⁶⁷⁷ over Israeli policies towards the *Intifadah*. However, whatever the protestations Kinnock conveyed to the Israeli political figures and the media, the fact that he remained convinced that Israel represented a democratic state ensured that he continued to afford his continuing loyalty. This was conveyed by Kinnock to Yitzhak Rabin (Israeli Defence Minister) as follows:

‘Here is the good news: I was in the hospital in Nablus, I said things based on my eye-witnessed experience (filmed by television cameras) of what jeopardy Israel will put itself in if the children were reacted to like this! You and your people have formed a country which is the only one for several hundred miles in any direction that would have that on its television, so do not worry, as long as you do that everything is OK.’⁶⁷⁸

Israel’s democratic credentials and status perhaps explains how, in spite of Kinnock’s outspoken criticisms to camera, the two politicians were able to hold relatively friendly discussions and were ultimately able to issue a joint statement on the need for an international peace conference. As Kinnock’s biographer Martin Westlake says:

‘That they were able to do so owed much to Kinnock’s international activism, an aspect of his political career consistently overlooked by the British media. The Israelis, particularly [Shimon] Peres (a close friend), [Menachem] Begin and [Yitzhak] Rabin, knew that Kinnock had consistently defended them and the democratic state of Israel throughout many years during which doing so

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid., (30.01.2004: 2)

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid., (30.01.2004: 2)

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid., (30.01.2004: 2)

was not very popular in the Labour Party of the Socialist International [late 1970s and 1980s]. Now he argued that the response to the *Intifadah* was understandable but extremely clumsy, with tragic results for Palestinian youngsters and damage to Israel's standing.⁶⁷⁹

In one sense, Kinnock remained a vital ally of Zionism and Israel within the Labour Party since, unlike many, he was able to differentiate between the Labor Party in Israel and Likud - in that they were not 'different sides of the same coin' and, in terms of the Israeli Labor Party's participation in a series of National Unity coalition governments since 1984, Kinnock justified this on the basis that Labor figures were a moderating influence upon the more fundamentalist Likud-led coalition.

In summary, Kinnock may not have agreed with Israeli policies, and he certainly had little sympathy or identity with Likud - Labor's coalition partners - but nevertheless as a pragmatist and democrat, he articulated his criticisms in a classic forerunner of Blairism and Clintonism: Kinnock generally accepted the realities of a situation as opposed to rejecting what existed on an ideological basis and thereby forfeiting any possibility of influence. In short, he subscribed to the ultra-pragmatist approach of 'dealing with people and issues as they exist, as opposed to what you would prefer them to be.'⁶⁸⁰

Eric Heffer and the Early Day Motion of 1988

If Israeli suppression of the Palestinian *Intifadah* was one *external determinant* of the deviation from a pro-political Zionist to an even-handed consensus within the party during the late 1980s, the PLO's conversion to a diplomatic route to peace was another. This can be demonstrated by examining the Labour contribution in a Commons question concerning an Early Day Motion to mark the first anniversary of the *Intifadah* (1987-1988). The motion quoted by the new far-left MP - Dave Nellist - recounts the influence of the PLO reforms which began in the 1970s and

⁶⁷⁹ Westlake, Martin & St. John, Ian (2001: 463)

⁶⁸⁰ Mencer, David (03.06.2004: 2) *Interview: Mencer-Nelson*, House of Commons, Tea Rooms, London

resulted in the adoption of a political rather than military resolution by the Palestine National Council (PNC) at the Algiers Summit in 1988:⁶⁸¹

‘That this House notes the speech of the Palestine Liberation Organisation Chairman, Yasser Arafat, at the Geneva meeting of the United Nations, and the declaration, at its Algiers summit, by the Palestinian National Council, of an independent Palestinian state; recognises the enthusiasm with which the proclamation was welcomed in the Occupied Territories, and the sympathy generated throughout the international labour movement;. . . contrasts the growing international support for the cause of the Palestinians, based on the heroism of the workers and youth in Gaza and the West Bank, with the deep unease of past methods of terror campaigns, hijackings and guerrillaism, and welcomes the recognition by the Palestine Liberation Organisation's leaders that those past methods have not, and would not have, forced Israel into submission.’⁶⁸²

Nellist's sentiments were shared by the archetypal ‘old’ left-wing figure of Eric Heffer. Heffer is a quintessential example of a new post-1945 parliamentary generation after being elected in 1966. He was a declared supporter of Israel on the basis of the ‘early socialist Zionists ideas,’⁶⁸³ his Christian roots - as Heffer says: ‘Wherever we went in Israel I could not but be reminded of the Bible and its stories. The whole country made religion real,’⁶⁸⁴ - and his perception of the Jewish need for a state in the aftermath of the Holocaust: ‘Labour Party members felt a special

⁶⁸¹ The Algiers Summit was convened in June 1988 to show Arab support the first Palestinian *Intifadah* and call for an international conference on peace in the Middle East. At a November meeting of the PNC in Algiers, a state of Palestine was declared based on UN Resolutions 181, of the 1947 Partition Plan. A UN General Assembly vote accepted the declaration by 104/2, December 15, 1988, Resolution, A/RES/43/177, succeeded by the 1993 Oslo Accords.

⁶⁸² Nellist, Dave (15.12.1988) *Business of the House*, Hansard, col. 1088, *quoting*, Early Day Motion, No. 201, December 8, 1988

⁶⁸³ Heffer, Eric (1991: 126) *Never A Yes Man: The Life and Politics of an Adopted Liverpudlian*, Chapter 12, *Huyton Man*, (London: Verso)

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, (1991: 127)

responsibility towards the Jews and when Israel was established in 1948 all my sympathy was with its people.’⁶⁸⁵

But again, as with other Labour MPs and related figures, by the 1980s Heffer was also a supporter of a Palestinian state, declaring in the debate that Britain had an historic obligation to advance a peace which served the national rights of both peoples. Heffer also made clear the unacceptable dimensions of Israeli occupation policies as he had himself led the first Labour Party delegation to visit Israel after the 1967 War, when Israel had assured the delegation that the ‘area would be in their hands for only a short time and they would use it as a bargaining factor for peace.’⁶⁸⁶ Twenty-one years later, Israel had reneged on its promises, settling the Occupied Territories with its own population. Heffer explained how his own disillusionment with Israel, combined with a move out of the ignorance which had been so dismissive of Palestinian rights, had led him to a non-partisan position:

‘When the delegation returned from Israel we gave reports to MPs and to the Labour Friends of Israel. I remained a ‘Labour Friend’ for many years and spoke on their platforms at Labour Conferences. Time has changed my views. Today [1991] I firmly believe that the Palestinians have a right to their own state and that Israel is simply a client of the U.S. Such socialist idealism as existed in Israel has more or less been destroyed.’⁶⁸⁷

The importance of the PLO’s decision in 1988 to move towards the diplomatic option was recognized again in the speech by David Winnick⁶⁸⁸ of the centre-left. He also first offered an evaluation of the evolution of the deviation process, emphasizing that being even-handed in approach was not an abandonment of Israel *per se*:

‘We know what has been happening in the Occupied Territories and on the West Bank in the past 12 months. We know of the injuries that have been caused and the deaths that have occurred. First and foremost, there is a need

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid., (1991: 126-127)

⁶⁸⁶ Ibid., (25.11.1998) *Foreign Affairs and Defence*, Hansard, col. 380

⁶⁸⁷ Ibid., (1991: 127)

⁶⁸⁸ David Winnick (b.1933) MP: (Croydon South, 1966-1970), (Walsall North, 1979-present)

for both Israel and the Palestinians to accept mutual recognition. There is no solution, and there can never be a solution, based on Israel going out of existence, whatever the rights and wrongs of Israel coming into existence in 1948. We know why that happened: the 2,000 years of anti-Semitism, which culminated in the Holocaust; and it goes without saying that I am totally committed to the state of Israel remaining in existence.’⁶⁸⁹

Winnick continues to indicate the importance of Palestinian initiatives in making the deviation process possible:

‘Equally, Israel can never have peace and security until the Palestinians have a state of their own. For 40 years, the Palestinians have had no state, which is why I welcome the modest but useful step of the decision taken last week in Algiers by the Palestine Liberation Organisation. I wish that it has been more clear and explicit and had spelt out in so many words that it recognised the state of Israel. It did not go so far, but, by accepting United Nations resolution 242, it implied that it recognised the existence of Israel.

When we had the PLO representative in Britain, speaking recently at a meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Labour Party, he made it clear that the Palestinians have now reached the stage at which they will recognise Israel. The responsibility now rests on the Israelis, and I am extremely disappointed by the negative attitude taken by the Israeli Government last week.’⁶⁹⁰

Winnick’s testimony demonstrates that he as a centre-left figure had accepted the position of a two-state resolution, - a neutralist position. The PLO’s own acceptance of a two State solution had enabled the centre-left to find common ground with the Palestinians - satisfying their need to show solidarity with an oppressed national people in their struggle for independence, but equally allowing them to maintain their essential support for Zionism and Israel. On the basis of that compromise, for

⁶⁸⁹ Winnick, David (22.11.1988), *Debate on the Address*, Hansard, col. 69-70

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid., (22.11.1988)

Winnick at least the *essential dilemma* was addressed, if not entirely resolved for Labour.

The process described by Heffer and Winnick resulting from the reform of the PLO assisted the deviation process through to 1993 and the signing of the Oslo and Washington Accords. With the abandonment of the armed struggle by the PLO even some of Labour's best known 'Friends of Israel' were converted to the cause of supporting a two-state resolution. Greville Janner⁶⁹¹ who said himself that 'Israel's foes have long regarded me as Israel's parliamentary voice,' stated that if Labour were to assist in locating a resolution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict the party must avoid emulating the Conservative government's 'folly' in hesitating to recognise the PLO's Algiers declaration, with a call for 'the involvement of both sides.'⁶⁹² Janner's own family had been victims of persecution in Eastern Europe; he had investigated Nazi war crimes whilst serving as a British Officer and witnessed the aftermath of the Holocaust, which converted him to Zionism in 1948 when he had 'danced the *hora* in Trafalgar Square when the UN accepted Israel's statehood.'⁶⁹³

Another prominent Labour MP to advance even-handedness was Neil Kinnock's close parliamentary colleague, Gerald Kaufman. The impact of the PLO diplomatic manoeuvres on him is made abundantly clear in his comments regarding the Conservative government's own response to America's decision to deny Arafat the chance to address the United Nations General Assembly:

'What a wriggling, snivelling response we have had from the Foreign Secretary [Malcolm Rifkind]. How can he offer any justification for the pusillanimous abstention by Britain yesterday in the Legal Committee when 129 nations voted in favour of a modest, sensible resolution which simply asked the United States to reconsider what it had done?

⁶⁹¹ Janner, Greville (b.1928) MP: (Leicester North West, 1970-1974), (Leicester West, 1974-1997)

⁶⁹² Janner, Greville (30.11.1988) *Palestine National Council*, Hansard, col. 694

⁶⁹³ Janner, Greville (1998: 16-17) *One Hand Alone Cannot Clap: An Arab-Israeli Universe, In the Beginning*, Chapter 1, *In The Beginning*, (London: Robson)

Would it not have been a good idea to give Mr. Arafat the opportunity to state before the General Assembly what was implicit and clear in the Algiers declaration - that the PLO recognises resolutions 242 and 338 - and also what Mr. Faisal Awaida of the PLO said explicitly in London yesterday - that the PLO is ready to recognise the state of Israel?'⁶⁹⁴

Kaufman was born in 1930 the 'son of a Jewish East European refugee tailor'⁶⁹⁵ in Leeds. He became Harold Wilson's Political Press Advisor and was noted for sporting an Israeli lapel badge in Cabinet meetings during the 1967 Six-Day war. But it was as Shadow Foreign Affairs Spokesperson during Neil Kinnock's leadership that Kaufman really became noted. He was vociferously opposed to both the 'old' and 'new' left-wing of the early 1980s and was a natural reformist and moderate left-wing ally of Kinnock, Hattersley and Healey. He was also a Zionist and friend of Israel, having 'fallen in love' with the country on a visit in 1961.⁶⁹⁶ Nonetheless, Kaufman was profoundly and increasingly aware of the country's political flaws. His two books on the subject, *To Build the Promised Land* (1973) and *Inside the Promised Land* (1986) convey the transformation of a single Labour MP from a staunch pro-Israel to a firm supporter of even-handed position. But they could easily account - in many senses - for the divergence of the consensus and policy position of the wider Labour Party. Kaufman was particularly critical of Israel during the First *Intifadah*.

Under Kinnock and Kaufman (as Shadow Foreign Secretary), Labour published a Foreign Policy Review Document in 1989. Under a section entitled *The Middle East*, the party sets out a policy position regarding the Israel-Palestinian issue - the '*extra dimension*' - within the broader regional conflict. Coming in 1989, the contents represented policy proposals for the next general election (1991-92) (subject to the approval of the September party conference). When it came to the Israel-Palestinian question the greater balance was clear, as was evidently a pragmatic approach to policy. With a strong Rita Hinden school of thought in emphasis the document states:

⁶⁹⁴ Kaufman, Gerald (30.11.1988) *United Nations*, Hansard, col. 691

⁶⁹⁵ Hughes, Colin & Wintour, Patrick (1990: 109) *Labour Rebuilt: The New Model Party*, Chapter 8, *Defence. Leave it to Gerald*, (London: Fourth Estate: London)

⁶⁹⁶ Kaufman, Gerald (1973:1-2) *To Build the Promised Land*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson)

‘To us in the Labour Party, the issues are clear. Instead of wasting vast sums of money they do not possess and cannot afford in fighting or preparing to fight each other, they should be working together to solve the problems of poverty, deprivation and lack of development which are endemic in the region.’⁶⁹⁷

Despite the underling economic theme, there is a clear prevailing residue located in the repeated focus upon the ‘rights of Palestinians to self-determination’ and the recognition that the ‘Palestinians have never enjoyed the democratic rights to which they are entitled,’ all of which demonstrate the concern to address issues once ignored by the Labour Party. Evidence as to the pragmatist character of the document lies in the reference to the concerns of *both sides*, but while statehood is a referenced criteria for both parties in terms of security - and the related threat of violence - this remains based on a classic culturally prejudiced Labour premise that security concerns only extend to Israel and that by inference Israel is the recipient of Palestinian violence and not the instigator or perpetrator: ‘It is essential that any settlement provides built-in guarantees, for Israel’s security’, particularly as Israel is ‘surrounded by hostile neighbours.’ As such, Israel has ‘every justification to be concerned about the integrity and survival of their state.’⁶⁹⁸

However, with the developments arising from the 1988 Algiers declaration, ‘proper arrangements for Israel’s security which will satisfy and reassure the Israeli government and people’ are cited as making this prerequisite possible. Kinnock’s non-partisan pragmatism and his increasing effort to distance and dilute the influence of the *essential dilemma* for Labour figures and policy-making, is also demonstrated through the distinct emphasis upon the status of the conflict within the context of the United Nations (international law). With the reference to the Israeli ‘occupied’ territories, and a role for Europe in terms of a call for an ‘international conference’

⁶⁹⁷ Musallam, Ramzi *Current Labour Party policy on the Middle East*, Gulf Report: The Economic, Geopolitical and Strategic Survey of the Gulf, Number 22, Second Year, June 1989, pp. 24-25, *quoting*, Labour Party Policy Review, *The Middle East*, p.24

⁶⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.25

with the issue as a 'major foreign policy priority'⁶⁹⁹ of the EEC, Kinnock and Labour are one-step removed from directly criticising Israel. Notably, as the academic Musallam says, despite the issues of imbalance contained in the proposed policy document, it was 'rubber-stamped by conference delegates'⁷⁰⁰ to form Labour's policy-position on the conflict in the run-up to the 1992 general election and the Oslo signings (1993).⁷⁰¹

The Leadership of John Smith and Margaret Becket

Neil Kinnock's departure as Labour Leader occurred after the party's fourth successive electoral defeat in 1992. Nevertheless, as the legacy of Neil Kinnock's internal Labour reforms and modernization process continued to determine domestic affairs, so they remained as an influence on foreign decision and policy-making.

⁶⁹⁹ Ibid., (June 1989: 24)

⁷⁰⁰ Ibid., (June 1989: 24)

⁷⁰¹ Despite appearances, the shift in Labour's policy position resulting from left-wing pressure during the 1980s was not quite what is seemed: although Ross' claim that the force arose from the grass-roots is supported by Edmunds, the achievements are substantially qualified: 'The movement toward a policy recognising Palestinian national rights was undoubtedly a bottom-up one, starting in the constituency parties and the extra-parliamentary left, moving up the internal decision making bodies and, eventually, capturing the parliamentary leadership. Even so, it is interesting to note that the campaign's success, to some extent, depended on those supporting a policy change taking control of the centre: the NEC, the International Department and the parliamentary leadership. It was only when the left started to dominate these bodies and a left-wing leader (Michael Foot) was in place, that the policy supporting the PLO was incorporated into official policy statements. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that in the end it was the activists who acquiesced to the leaderships position rather than controlled it. They included clauses explicitly stating their support for Israel's existence in their conference motions. The leadership also overturned the 1988 and 1989 resolutions despite the fact that they had won a two thirds majority needed to become policy. In the end, too, the activists were compelled to accept a policy that refused to include an explicit reference to Palestinian statehood, preferring to use the more neutral sounding concept of self-determination without specifying its content.' Edmunds, June (May, 1998: 117-118)

The pragmatic realism and abandonment of ideologically based idealism was retained by the new Labour Leader, John Smith, and the Acting Leader Margaret Beckett (May-July 1994).⁷⁰² The retention of pragmatism stemmed from the recognition within the mainstream of the party resulting from the changing fortunes in the election results that showed the party was increasingly viewed as a potential party of government in the minds of the electorate. These developments were to have profound consequences for Labour's approach to foreign affairs generally, and the situation in the Middle East and the Israel-Palestinian conflict in particular, as the role of ideology diminished further with the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern bloc in 1990-1991. If anything, Labour's brand of political pragmatism became a more refined and concentrated product as the success of Clintonism found further resonance with some Labour figures. As Clare Short conveys after Neil Kinnock's resignation after Labour's fourth successive election defeat in April 1992:

'It was after the 1992 defeat [and Neil Kinnock's resignation] that New Labour was created by a very small group of people who went on to take the reins of power and to restrict and diminish the democracy of the Party. The idea of New Labour was an imitation of President Clinton's New Democrats, and focused completely on presidential questions. It became clear . . . that neither Blair nor New Labour had any significant guiding principles, philosophy or values. The 'Third Way' was an attempt to turn triangulation - the identification of two opposing views so the middle position can be pursued - into a philosophy. But triangulation was a tactic and contained no guiding principles.'⁷⁰³

Despite continued disquiet, as with his predecessor Neil Kinnock, Smith did not shrink from continuing the internal reform and modernising programme of the Labour

⁷⁰² Margaret Beckett was Deputy Leader (1992-1994) when Smith died, therefore automatically becoming Acting Leader.

⁷⁰³ Short, Clare (2004: 2) *An Honourable Deception? New Labour, Iraq, and the Misuse of Power*, (London: Free Press)

Party. One of the key reforms John Smith introduced was 'one person, one vote,'⁷⁰⁴ effectively dissolving the union bloc-vote system.

John Smith's reforms included Labour's approach to foreign affairs. In a key foreign policy speech Smith conveyed his own vision and that of the party at a time when foreign affairs and issues were at the forefront of British politics. The first Gulf War (1990-1991) and the Oslo-Washington Accords (1993) encapsulated the two central tenets of Smith's and Labour's approach to decision and policy-making amid the tumultuous external events in the post-Cold War and New World Order: the primacy of the United Nations; and the adoption and application of political pragmatism. Smith asserted his own belief in this pragmatist approach by referencing the historical role and support the Labour Party undertook in the development of the United Nations as a key non-party political organ and forum in world affairs:

'The Labour Party has always insisted that support for the United Nations must be a key component of British foreign policy. The post-war Labour government and, in particular, its distinguished Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, played a critical role in its foundation. In fact the Labour Party is the only major political Party in Britain that includes support for the United Nations in its constitutional objectives.'⁷⁰⁵

Smith follows this socialist perspective and appreciation of the United Nations with an appraisal of the successes of political pragmatism in addressing some of the most intractable issues that exist in the dramatically changing international climate of the

⁷⁰⁴ Labour's conference structure gave access via the bloc-vote to the decision and policy-making process of conference across a federation of affiliated organisation. These organs comprised the constituency branches, trades unions, the Fabians and Co-operative movement, and after 1920, *Poale Zion*. In the economic climate and logistical circumstances of 1900 bloc-voting made practical, if dubious democratic sense; however, the rapid growth of unions, membership and subsequent amalgamations resulted in a disproportionate influence of the unions upon Labour policy.

⁷⁰⁵ Brivati, Brian (2000: 244) *Guiding Light: The Collected Speeches of John Smith*, (London: Politico's)

post-Cold War era and 'New World Order.' On the Israel-Palestinian conflict specifically, Smith noted approvingly:

'I believe there is much that is being done and can be done to build a better world. This positive agenda was reinforced for me very powerfully at a meeting of the Socialist International that I attended in Lisbon recently.

Speaking at the conference were Shimon Peres, the Foreign Minister of Israel, Abdel Latif, the representative of the PLO, and from South Africa, Nelson Mandela, Leader of the ANC. The progress reports they gave us on the Middle East peace settlement . . . were truly remarkable. They were reports of agreement, conciliation, and negotiation between Jew and Arab . . . that would have seemed unimaginable just a few years ago. Of course, there is still a long way to go in the Middle East - a lot of fear and hatred still to be overcome. But the evidence of progress - real progress cannot be denied.'⁷⁰⁶

John Smith's tenure (April 1992 - May 1994) as Leader of the Labour Party was tragically cut short. Nevertheless, it laid further foundations for the pragmatism of Tony Blair and New Labour which were to follow. It also provided the basis for the conclusion to the deviation process and the arrival at a neutralist consensus and policy trajectory for Labour.

The Palestinian First *Intifadah* concluded with the signing of the Oslo Accords between Israel and the PLO in September 1993. Margaret Beckett - the then Deputy Leader - addressed the annual party conference with an assessment of British Labour-Israeli Labor Party relations in the wake of the historic agreement. Beckett bestowed Labour's congratulations upon the Israeli Labor Party and its leaders, and summarized the *nature* of the protracted and close relationship which both British and Israeli Labour Parties had enjoyed. In a written reply to a request for an account of the *basis* for the *nature* of the relationship extolled at the conference Beckett states:

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid., (2000: 241)

‘There is no doubt that the tentative moves towards a peace settlement in the Middle East would not have taken place had Likud still been the Party of government in Israel and they have only occurred because of the election of a Labor government.’⁷⁰⁷

Adding:

‘That is not, of course, to say that there are not many issues on which the Israeli Labor Party and the British Labour Party would not see eye to eye, or indeed that there are not many episodes in the past history of Israel where there has been considerable disquiet in the British Labour Party, a disquiet which has invariably been communicated to our Israeli colleagues.’⁷⁰⁸

Although Beckett’s reference to ‘episodes’ hints at some fluctuations in relations (a point made by Fatchett, who also states that ‘the nature and the level of the contacts have changed over the years’⁷⁰⁹), what Beckett’s explanation underlines is not just the continuity in terms of the pragmatism that is now firmly enshrined in Labour’s approach to foreign affairs, but also how this is applied to the Israel-Arab/Palestinian conflict, despite the seriousness of the Israeli Labor Party’s role in the conflict. As with Kinnoch, the clear emphasis on the peace process allowed at the same time Labour - and Labour figures in particular - to create distance from the issue, and by doing so, defer the worst excesses of the *essential dilemma*. In this example, overt criticism of the excesses of the Israeli Labor Party’s role in violations of international law and civilian deaths is demurred by the emphasis upon their role in facilitating the peace process.

Conclusion

It is evident that the combined effects of a series of *external determinants* during the 1980s sowed further ‘seeds of doubt’ in the minds of even some of the most

⁷⁰⁷ Beckett, Margaret (16.11.1993: 1)

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid., (16.11.1993: 1)

⁷⁰⁹ Fatchett, Derek (21.01.1997: 1) *Letter: Fatchett-Nelson*, House of Commons

committed pro-political Zionist/Israel figures of their demographic and parliamentary generations. The growing influence and legacies of the left-wing (old and new) within the Labour Party in the period after 1967 on the Israel-Palestinian issues is also clearly evident, as is the equally important development of the more mainstream opinion and positions in Labour, represented by the broader deviation process towards neutralism which extended across all wings of the party. By the 1970s the left-wing (within which many pro-Israel Jewish Labour MPs were located) and far-left-wing had either remained pro-Israel (Michael Foot for example), become neutralist, or outright pro-Palestinian. As Kinnock says of this period when pro-Palestinianism came to the forefront and to briefly dominate the party's policy position:

'It became an issue of the left-wing in the 1960s and early 1970s when wearing a *Kaffiyah* [Palestinian black and white head-garment] became quite fashionable. Up until then of course the left-wing in the Labour Party had contained a very significant number of Jewish people, and that is apart from the ones who were strongly supportive of Israel.'⁷¹⁰

Significant sections of the left-wing and far-left of the party were able to convert others within the party to at least adopt a non-partisan or neutralist position, and even a pro-Palestinian position (enshrined in the secular State of Palestine position, effectively dissolving Israel). This conversion success was undoubtedly assisted by some extraordinary *external determinants*, notably the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the repression of the related Palestinian *Intifadah*, all of which were systematically and graphically conveyed by the international media. The combined effect of these factors was that Labour MPs and related figures became progressively more compromised as the *essential dilemma* was exacerbated by their relations with the Israeli Labor Party, particularly as the PLO's corresponding moves towards a diplomatic and political option gathered momentum and acceptance.

The predominant *internal determinant* of the period is located in the general lurch to the left-wing, and specifically the capture of the party hierarchy and decision/policy-making machinery of the constituency parties, the trades unions and the NEC by both

⁷¹⁰ Kinnock, Neil (30.01.2004: 6)

grass-roots activists and far-left infiltrators in the early years of the 1980s. These *determinants* were in part the consequence of the general dissatisfaction of Labour's drift from socialist ideology and policies, and the internal structural reforms that allowed such sections and affiliated bodies of the party to fall beyond the control of the leadership. All these internal and external factors assisted the deviation process towards a neutralist consensus within the party ranks to be briefly translated into pro-Palestinian policy position. In reality the pro-Palestinianism was in essence an anomaly resulting from a myriad of related factors, rather than a genuine Labour Party consensus to replace Israel with a secular State of Palestine.

A second *internal determinant* was the rise to power within the party of a new generation of leaders. As the academic Jonathan Spyer says:

‘In the 1970s and 1980s, a generation influenced by the politics of the 1960s and the European New Left entered the Labour Party. Leading figures today such as Clare Short, Peter Hain, Jeremy Corbyn and Ken Livingstone may in different ways be seen as the products of this experience. For this generation, the cause of Palestinian nationalism was an important rallying point.’⁷¹¹

Although the immediate post-1945 ‘generation believed that the Jews deserved to have Israel’⁷¹² in response to the Holocaust and Jewish survivors, this generation diminished significantly in the 1970s and 1980s. The majority of new MPs were more likely to be motivated not just by their awareness of the Holocaust but also the resulting Palestinians predicament that was created as a consequence of British, European, American and Labour's figures responses to that abhorrence. As Kinnock recounts:

‘There was a generational division within the affiliations of the Labour movement: if you were over thirty-five or forty you were pretty likely to be

⁷¹¹ Spyer, Jonathan (June 2, 2004), pp.4

⁷¹² Kinnock, Neil (30.01.2004: 8)

pro-Israeli; if you were under that age you were pretty likely to be pro-Palestinian.⁷¹³

Under Kinnock's leadership, and again as a result of general election defeat, the party moved back to a centre-left persuasion. Kinnock's internal party reforms, which were advanced still further by his successor, John Smith, excluded much of the left-wing, and the far-left-wing (the so-called 'loony left') who had largely carried the policy agenda beyond the developing neutralist consensus into the uncharted territory of a pro-Palestinian position. Thus, the party consensus and policy position was brought back into a more rational and pragmatist neutralist line.

The return to a more neutralist position under Neil Kinnock's direction and control - via this brief pro-Palestinian policy detour - sat infinitely more comfortably with the broader moderate section of the party. This was particularly the case since there continued to be a strong solidarity with Jews in terms of the Holocaust experience, an affiliation with Israel as a democratic state, and a desire to regain confidence in the Israeli Labor Party, notably, the need to be able to distinguish Labor from its Likud partner. This was made infinitely easier by the achievements of the Oslo peace process in 1993.

We can therefore summarise that the period from 1980-1993 saw a brief period in which the *essential dilemma* was perceived as basically resolved in favour of the anti-colonialist and solidarity with the Palestinian struggle, at the expense of pro-political Zionism and the shared *common origins, related religious philosophies* and *shared socialist ideologies* of the British Labour Party and the Israel Labor Party. However, a cohort of *external* and *internal determinants* acted and combined, along with the influence of interested non-partisan individuals and groups, to push the party back to a position of neutrality. The neutrality position could accommodate a basic pro-political Zionism with accompanying and constructive criticism for Israeli policies, and effective support for Palestinian national aspirations. This position and approach was to be primarily facilitated through the mechanisms of political pragmatism under the

⁷¹³ Ibid., (30.01.2004: 8)

umbrella of the EEC, the Socialist International and the United Nations, and thereby attempting to alleviate the worst repercussions of the psychological, ideological and political components of the *essential dilemma* pulling against the different propositions of Labour and related figures as they wrestled with their traditional sympathies against the evidential realities and the neutralist positions of the new parliamentary generations motivated by the predicament of the Palestinians and the wider Middle Eastern region.

Chapter 5

Contemporary Era: 1994-2001

Tony Blair and the Foreign Policy-Making of New Labour (1994-2001)

Introduction

The agreement between the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and the State of Israel, and the accompanying mutual recognition pact known collectively as the Oslo Accords of 1993, initially appeared to offer the Labour Party an unprecedented opportunity to address the legacies and constraints imposed by the *essential dilemma*. With reconciliation between the two key protagonists (Israel and the Palestinians) the British Labour Party was effectively absolved on an important level from the influence and continuity of the *essential dilemma* and its component aspects: the Oslo signing relinquished a good deal of the contradictions posed by Labour's desire, on the one hand, to sustain its traditional pro-political Zionism/Israel position; and on the other, to fulfill the requirements of the party's socialist ideology in terms of supporting Palestinian resistance to Israeli colonial policies, by evoking the party's constitution commitment to uphold UN resolutions and international law.

The opportunity to address the *essential dilemma* presented by the *external determinant* - the Oslo Accords and the subsequent Middle East Peace Process (MEPP) - was shaped in large part by a major Labour-derived *internal determinant*: the death of John Smith and the resulting party leadership election - via the Acting leadership of Margaret Beckett - led to the ascendancy of Tony Blair and the New Labour Party in July 1994. The reform and modernization process begun by Neil Kinnock and continued by John Smith was accelerated and expanded under Blair as the remaining 'sacred cows' of old Labour were radically amended or jettisoned as a new Labour Party was fashioned. Blair's ultra-pragmatism and non-ideological philosophy - what became known as *Blairism*, - and an initial aversion to foreign

affairs, was to have profound consequences for Labour-Israel relations concerning the Israel-Palestinian conflict and the peace process, particularly as Labour moved from opposition to government 1997.

Previous chapters have demonstrated the crucial role played by one *internal determinant* in particular with regards to shaping Labour policy towards the Palestinian-Zionism/Israel conflict: that of key leadership figures and their personal political beliefs (notably Ramsay MacDonald, Clement Attlee, Harold Wilson, Michael Foot etc). This chapter explicates the political philosophy of *the* key leadership individual of the period, Tony Blair himself, and demonstrates how these beliefs translated into a response to the foreign policy issues during New Labour's opposition and early government experiences. The end result was a 'capturing' of Labour foreign policy by Blair and his closest confidants, including non-Labour figures and policy advisors. Traditional party and government mechanisms for formulating policy were mostly bypassed by a small 'kitchen cabinet' style circle, which generally pursued policies which accorded with Blair's own personal philosophy. How this subsequently impacted upon New Labour relations with political Zionism, Israel and the Israel-Palestinian question will be addressed in chapter six.

"The best prime minister we never had": John Smith

John Smith's short (22 months) leadership saw something of a renaissance in Labour Party leadership interest in foreign affairs. Shortly before his death in May 1994, Smith gave the Tawney Lecture,⁷¹⁴ in which he outlined the crucial role which ethics played in his political outlook, a theme to be reiterated in the party in subsequent

⁷¹⁴ The Tawney Memorial Lectures are hosted by the Christian Socialist Movement (CSM) and named after the Christian socialist writer, university historian and economist, Richard Henry Tawney (b.1880-d.1962). The 'CSM is a movement of Christians with a radical commitment to social justice . . . and to fostering peace and reconciliation. Affiliated to the Labour Party and with members in the Commons, the Lords, on local councils and in trade unions and constituency Labour parties, CSM makes sure the Christian voice is heard in politics. Through lobbying, publications, public meetings, local branch activities, media work and other ways we are an effective voice for social justice.'

(<http://www.thecsm.org.uk/whoweare.html>)

years. For Smith this was an important moment in his career: as a life-long admirer of his ideas and writings, R. H. Tawney was also revered as the father of Christian socialism, viewing British socialism as particularly ‘ethical . . . and pragmatic.’⁷¹⁵

Smith’s Christian socialism was inherently pragmatic. He viewed his religious faith - like Presbyterians generally - as a deeply private matter between the individual and God; a matter which shaped his own outlook, but did not have to be imposed on those with whom he worked and dealt. This was reflected too in how he organized his office. Decision and policy-making under Smith was generated, in part, from within a small team of internal and external advisors, employing consultants and managers with their own areas of expertise and experience (press and publications, domestic and foreign affairs, conference and speech writing). As Smith’s biographer Mark Stuart conveys: ‘each person in the office had a personal line of influence to John. For instance . . . Meta Ramsay and Andrew Graham supplied their own policy ideas.’⁷¹⁶ One of these policy ideas would take Smith on his only foreign trip as Leader of the Opposition. Over Christmas 1993, Smith was encouraged to undertake a visit to the Middle East: to Israel and the Occupied Territories. According to Mark Stuart, it had been the idea of Meta Ramsay,⁷¹⁷ an assistant and advisor on foreign affairs to the Labour Policy Unit of John Smith’s Office:

‘Over Christmas 1993, Smith went to Israel accompanied by Mike Elrick⁷¹⁸ and Meta Ramsay. Meta felt it was important to foster the Jewish vote and

⁷¹⁵ John Smith [Editor: Christopher Bryant] (1993: 127-128) *Reclaiming the Ground: Christianity and Socialism*, Chapter 6, *John Smith, Reclaiming the Ground - Freedom and the Value of Society*, (London: Spire)

⁷¹⁶ Stuart, Mark (2005: 311) *John Smith: A Life*, Chapter 21, *Just One More Heave*, (2003), (London: Politico’s)

⁷¹⁷ Scottish Labour Party related figure Margaret Mildred [Meta] Ramsay (b.1936) (Baroness Ramsay of Cartvale, 1996). After a career in the British Diplomatic Service (1969-1991), Ramsay became foreign policy advisor to John Smith and Jack Cunningham (Shadow Foreign Affairs Spokesperson, 1992-1995), an Advisory Council Member of the Foreign Policy Centre - the foreign affairs Think Tank established by Tony Blair (1998) - and is the House of Lords chair of the Labour Friends of Israel (LFI).

⁷¹⁸ Mike Elrick was a member of John Smith’s Press Team.

improve links with Labour's sister Party in Israel, including its leader and Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin. Israel was chosen in preference to India, where Smith would have visited the following year, had he lived.'⁷¹⁹

According to an interview Stuart conducted with Baroness Ramsay in 2003, Smith had a series of 'excellent individual meetings with Prime Minister Rabin, and Shimon Peres, the Israeli Foreign Minister, both of whom he knew from meetings of the Socialist International.'⁷²⁰ However, as Stuart continues to convey via Mike Elrick, Smith's tour and meetings were not all as constructive or as informative as had been expected:

'The rest of the visit was not a great success in terms of generating publicity. Smith grew increasingly irritated with his minder, whom he considered patronizing. He was also unhappy with the briefing he received from a senior Israeli security spokesperson.

Mike Elrick recalls: "John didn't suffer fools gladly, and he felt insulted by the bog standard briefing, believing that he had not been given the respect that a Leader of the opposition from Britain deserved."⁷²¹

While the Labour Leader was not entirely happy with his treatment by the Israelis, and despite having visited the Occupied Territories (staying in Jerusalem), there is no record of any meetings with Palestinian representatives, aside from the Christian Palestinian church minister who officiated at the Christmas Eve Service at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. His leadership would perhaps have been unlikely to cause any significant redirection in Labour's policy trajectory. But Smith's death left only room for speculation.

New Labour in Opposition (1994 1997)

⁷¹⁹ Stuart, Mark (2005: 349-350) Chapter 23, *Stresses and Strains*, (2003)

⁷²⁰ Ibid., (2005: 349-350) *quoting*, Interview, Baroness Ramsay of Cartvale, June 24, 2003

⁷²¹ Ibid., (2005: 349-350) *quoting*, Interview, Mike Elrick, June 10, 2003

The death of John Smith in May 1994 and the election of Tony Blair as Labour Party Leader in July precipitated a further radical reform and modernization of the Labour Party, crucial to which was the influence of the new, young party leader himself.

Tony Blair's, and by extension, New Labour's political philosophy, was shaped above all by one defining factor: successive general electoral defeats. The general election defeats of 1979, 1983, 1987 and 1992 had scarred Blair and traumatised the entire party. The reform and modernization process that would eventually produce New Labour had begun with the 1983 election debacle. Margaret Thatcher's 1983 victory condemned Labour's left-wing to irreparable decline, and issued a licence to Neil Kinnock - and to a lesser extent John Smith - to undertake the most comprehensive and radical 'root and branch' process of reform and modernization in Labour's history, with the single goal being to win a general election and form a Labour government. The party's move to the left-wing in the leadership, the decision and policy-making body (NEC), and in policies (1980-1983), had been an major electoral error; more than that, the party became infused with the belief that orthodox socialism was now increasingly incompatible with modern democratic socialist party.

Tony Blair was the quintessential product of both the election defeat and opposition experience, and came to symbolize this jettisoning of the left-wing and of the dogmatic subscription to the socialist ideology - or indeed ideology *per se*. Blair had lost his deposit in the 1983 drubbing at the Beaconsfield by-election, and spent nearly a decade frustrated and agonizing over the seminal reality of British politics: that you can have the finest policies, but without power, they were essentially meaningless. Blair had come to realize that securing power was as much about image, presentation and perception as much as it was about the core substance of policies. Still, the electorate had to trust a party: Labour had - for numerous reasons related to the 1970s and the following left-wing surge of the early 1980s - lost that trust. Recovering it would require both presentation and substance. Tony Blair believed, and Labour reached a consensus, that he was the most likely person to present and deliver the policies and win the trust, and thus political power.

In reaching that party consensus the political intellectual heavyweight, Gordon Brown⁷²² - widely considered, as a scholar and published socialist theorist, to be Smith's and Labour's *heir apparent*, - had agreed not to contest the party leadership election in favour of the more dynamic and photogenic married family figure of Tony Blair. It was generally viewed across a wide section of the party that Blair with his charisma and ideological vacuity would be more likely to achieve the election of a Labour government. In terms of electoral success Labour's decision to trust and invest in Blair was to prove justified. Blair - the arch pragmatist and showman - was to deliver three successive election victories (1997, 2000 and 2005).

The Shaping of Blair's Political Philosophy

'No one gets anywhere alone.'⁷²³

The 1983 general election defeat and his early negative experiences of Labour's left-wing may have been a defining factor in Tony Blair's political development, but there are also important aspects of his early life and background that have also shaped his political and personal philosophy. The origins of Tony Blair's philosophy are said to be located in his early childhood and adolescence. Blair was raised in a religious family centred upon self-responsibility and led by an ambitious and professionally successful political-academic father, Leo Blair. As Tony Blair was to say himself, 'My father was Norman Tebbit' the working class 'get on your bike Tory and orthodox Thatcherite.'⁷²⁴

Blair's father may have become politically Conservative, but his broader background was in many ways traditional Labour, even brushed with Communism. The son of Celia Ridgway and Charles Parson (travelling music-hall actors), the greater influence

⁷²² Gordon Brown (b.1951) MP: (Dunfermline East, 1983-2005), (Kirkcaldy & Cowdenbeath, 2005-present); PM: June 2007-present; Chancellor, 1997-2007.

⁷²³ Hammad, Suheir (1996: iv) *Born Palestinian, Born Black*, (New York: Writers & Readers)

⁷²⁴ Seldon, Anthony. Ballinger, Chris. Collins, Daniel & Snowden, Peter (2004: 18) Chapter 2, *Father and Mother*

on Leo came from his adoptive parents James and Mary Blair and their life steeped in the poverty-stricken mire of the industrial working-class Govan district of Glasgow. James Blair was a shipyard worker and Communist. Tony Blair recalls his father's accounts of that upbringing:

'I remember my father telling me about being brought up in Glasgow in the 1930s, living in a crowded tenement, five or six families sharing a toilet, foster mother finding it hard to make ends meet, his foster father a shipyard worker subject to casual labour of those times.'⁷²⁵

Leo Blair's first job was in the employment of *The Daily Worker* (the British Communist Party's daily news paper), becoming Secretary of the Govan Branch of the Scottish Young Communist League by the age of 15 (1938). After contemplating a career as a Communist MP⁷²⁶ a period of military service (1942-1947) exposed him to a political metamorphosis as he rose from private to lieutenant. The military experience motivated Leo Blair to take a law degree, and to become a lawyer and lecturer in law at Durham University. As an illegitimate child raised by caring though materially-deprived parents, Leo had a restless desire for self-improvement and self-reliance; qualifications in law and a position in academia were for him double indemnities against life. As Seldon says: 'The law meant prosperity; and academia status.'⁷²⁷ Tony Blair's mother, Hazel Corscaden (b.1923-d.1975), was from a 'staunch Protestant family'⁷²⁸ which had migrated to Glasgow from County Donegal in Ireland. After her father's death and mother's re-marriage to a butcher, she left school at 14 after 'receiving little formal education' to become a government office worker; Hazel is described as 'religious, though not church-going.'⁷²⁹ Seldon states

⁷²⁵ Ibid., (2004: 18) Chapter 2

⁷²⁶ Two Communists were elected to parliament in 1945: Willie Gallacher (West Fife, 1935-1950) and Phil Piratin (Mile End/Stepney, 1945-1950)

⁷²⁷ Seldon, Anthony. Ballinger, Chris. Collins, Daniel & Snowdon, Peter (2004: 4) Chapter 4, *Father's Stroke, 1953-71*

⁷²⁸ Ibid., (2004: 17)

⁷²⁹ Ibid., (2004: 18)

that despite the success of his father it was Blair's mother who was the 'major influence on his world view and his politics.'⁷³⁰

'Not only did she help imbue him with religious faith: it was her social conscience, commitment to others and sheer kindness that coloured his outlook. Hers was not an ideological nor a Party political vision . . . , but she rooted in him a fundamental respect for others.'⁷³¹

These early roots were to provide the foundations of Blair's personal and political philosophy, in particular his pragmatism. While the values of Conservatism were admirable, they were not in themselves complete without the addition of a socialist welfare model. As a consequence Blair found he could not subscribe entirely to either political philosophy. The reality was that life required a much more complex arrangement comprising an overlapping and interrelating combination of self-reliance and state provision, family, religious faith, community and society. In short, no one gets anywhere alone. As a result of his father's stroke, virtually overnight the Blair family were exposed to the sobering reality and limitations of self-reliance, while at the same time they were catapulted into the realisation of the value and security of collective state provision of the kind located in socialist ideology. In Blair's words, 'on an emotional level I was suddenly made aware that nothing was permanent.'⁷³²

Blair was educated at one of the best and most expensive public schools in Durham, The Choristers School. From Choristers he proceeded to Fettes College, Edinburgh, one of Scotland's most prestigious private schools. While there he displayed little if any interest in politics, a trait that continued at University. According to Seldon there was 'little evidence of interest in the social issues of the late 1960s and early 1970s, despite some hints of a developing social conscience and awareness.' Similarly:

'Political interest seems to have remained firmly unawakened. The problems of the Wilson governments of 1966-70, trade union unrest, the General

⁷³⁰ Ibid., (2004: 22)

⁷³¹ Ibid., (2004: 20)

⁷³² Ibid., (2004: 7) Chapter 1

Election of June 1970 and the debate on entry into the European Economic Community in 1972 all seemed to pass him by.’⁷³³

Tony Blair read law at St. John’s College, Oxford. Despite Oxford’s tradition for political discourse and reputation for providing a production-line of political greats and national leaders, Blair showed no interest in joining any of the many political societies and debating groups epitomised by the Oxford Union which had hosted a raft of former Labour notables like Attlee, Wilson, Crosland and Jenkins. The revitalisation of Blair’s religious faith was more evident, though never remotely evangelical. While at Oxford, Blair was confirmed into the Anglican Church. The journalist Matthew d’Ancona claims, as a result of Blair’s first interview on his religious faith as party leader, his religious re-awakening at Oxford was the ‘defining moment of his life.’⁷³⁴

The person most attributed with attracting Blair back to religious belief was Peter Thomson,⁷³⁵ a mature 36 year old Australian and fellow student at Oxford (1972-1974). Seldon claims Thomson was ‘more important to Tony Blair than any other adult he met at school or university.’⁷³⁶ Tony Blair describes the influence of Thomson upon his religious beliefs and social conscience as follows:

‘I had always believed in God but I had been slightly detached from it. I couldn’t make sense of it. Peter [Thomson] made it relevant; practical rather than theological. Religion became less of a personal relationship with God. I began to see it in a much more social context . . . What I took from Peter

⁷³³ Ibid., (2004: 13)

⁷³⁴ Ibid., (2004: 34) Chapter 3, *Oxford and Loss of Mother, 1971-75*, quoting, Tony Blair, interview with Matthew d’Ancona, *Sunday Times*, November 13, 2003

⁷³⁵ Peter Thompson held a post as Chaplin at Geelong Grammar School Timbertop Victoria (satellite of the British school that educated Prince Charles), and retired as Head of St. Mark’s Anglican College, University of Adelaide.

⁷³⁶ Seldon, Anthony. Ballinger, Chris. Collins, Daniel & Snowden, Peter (2004: 39) Chapter 4, *Peter Thomson*

Thomson is the idea that your religious beliefs aren't something that shut you away from the world, but something that meant you had to go out and act.'⁷³⁷

Thomson stirred Blair's somewhat dormant religious faith, transforming it from a personal belief of the mind and individual worship, into an applied practical mechanism by which it was possible to influence society - for the good. It was the connection made by Thomson between religion and practical application that in essence made the tentative link for Blair between religion and politics that became the basis and character of his brand of Christian socialism - Blairism. In addition, it was Thomson's role that also influenced how Blair came to view society and its structure that came to contribute to Blair's somewhat unconventional socialism. Although British political life generally and within the Labour Party specifically was overtly and widely secular, Blair had been introduced to the means by which he could apply his religious faith in a political sphere. As Seldon says:

'Peter helped Tony stand outside England and the English ways of thinking on the English class system. He has helped open Tony's eyes to fresh ways of looking at things which are outside the box of conventional British Party political thinking.'⁷³⁸

An additional major contribution to the religious and political development of Tony Blair, was his introduction by Thomson to the Scottish Christian communitarian moral philosopher, John Macmurray.⁷³⁹ Blair's introduction to the writing of Macmurray served to further crystallise the religious and political marriage process.

The writings of Macmurray had converted Thomson to the concept of translating religious philosophy and faith into a political applied ideology; Macmurray's philosophy places the primacy of action as opposed to thought in contrast to the

⁷³⁷ Ibid., (2004: 44)

⁷³⁸ Ibid., (2004: 44)

⁷³⁹ John Macmurray (b.1891-d.1976) Jowett Lecturer (Philosophy), Balliol College, Oxford; Grote Professor of the Philosophy of the Mind and Logic, London; Prof. Moral Philosophy, Edinburgh University.

traditional practices of private and institutionalised worship and membership of the established church. Furthermore, it was Macmurray's all-abiding emphasis on the role of community, the importance of society, and especially the self-imposed question resulting from the relationship of individuals to society: 'which should predominate? Neither alone was his answer.'⁷⁴⁰ Seldon states:

'All his [Macmurray's] philosophy had a practical relevance; he changed the reference from the ideal to the real. Macmurray provided Thomson with the perfect riposte to what he saw as the bloodless tradition that had dominated so much of twentieth-century philosophy - local positivism and the linguistics of Wittgenstein, which he deemed a 'lost half century.'⁷⁴¹

In particular, it was the value of community and society espoused by Thomson and Macmurray which combined to shape the religious-political linkage that also absorbed all the background and experiences into a forward-looking and directional philosophy for Blair. As Peter Mandelson says of Blair's adoption of Macmurrayism:

'It was Macmurray's interpretation of the social commitment of Christianity through the idea of community, rather than the personal experience of extreme poverty and hardship, that inspired Blair's political awakening.

To create opportunities of self-fulfillment for all, which was the mainspring of his Christian sense of social justice, it was necessary to change people's social conditions. In other words, Christianity was not enough by itself - you needed politics and organisation, too, to improve society.'⁷⁴²

John Macmurray's most relevant publication for Blair was *Religion, Art, and Science* (1961), a treatise on the 'place of religion within the unity of human experience', religion representing 'one of three major modes of reflective activity' - Art and

⁷⁴⁰ Seldon, Anthony. Ballinger, Chris. Collins, Daniel & Snowdon, Peter (2004: 32) Chapter 3

⁷⁴¹ Ibid., (2004: 40) Chapter 4

⁷⁴² Mandelson, Peter (2002: 33) *The Blair Revolution Revisited*, Chapter 2, *Labour Leaders, Earliest Analysis*, (London: Politico's)

Science being the other two. Macmurray claimed that 'To talk of a 'philosophy of religion' is strictly improper. There is simply 'philosophy.'⁷⁴³ As such, it is not difficult to see the appeal of Macmurray to Blair in a spiritual sense:

'And religious problems cannot be solved by political means. The reason is simple. Religious problems are problems of free personal relations; they are problems of friendship, of fellowship, of reconciliation. One can organise cooperation: one cannot organise love.

In other terms, the religious problem of our times is the problem of founding a new and all-embracing civilisation. It is the problem of uniting, in one universal fellowship, all the various nationalities, races and traditions, the cultures and religions, of mankind.'⁷⁴⁴

Sceptics of the contribution made to Blair's religious re-awakening and the emergence of his political beliefs at Oxford question that the philosophical works were responsible for the political aspect of Blair's development. As Labour MP - Leopold Abse⁷⁴⁵ - says:

'Macmurray's instruction brought Blair to the Lord, but not to the Labour Party. No one could have been more anti-political than Macmurray, and if he [Blair] had the stamina to hack through the thicket of Macmurray's often dense prose, the only serious politics he would have discovered was Macmurray's tirade against Marx's irreligious doctrines.'⁷⁴⁶

⁷⁴³ Macmurray, John (1961: 7) *Religion, Art, and Science: A Study of the Reflective Activities in Man*, Chapter 1, *Science out of Bounds*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press)

⁷⁴⁴ Ibid., (1961: 68)

⁷⁴⁵ Leopold [Leo] Abse (b1917) MP: (Pontypool, 1958-1983), (Torfaen, 1983-1987)

⁷⁴⁶ Abse, Leo (1996: 96) *The Man Behind the Smile: Tony Blair and the Politics of Perversion*, Chapter 4, *Androgynous Politics: Tony Blair, Disavowals*, (London: Robson)

However, the most conclusive evidence to support Seldon and Mandelson's assertions as to the degree of influence made by Macmurray upon Blair are perhaps located in Blair's own testament given on entering Downing Street in May 1997:

'If you really want to understand what I'm all about you have to look at a guy called John Macmurray. It's all there.'⁷⁴⁷

What Macmurray facilitated by identifying the social aspects of Christianity via the concept of community - as opposed to individual faith and practice - was the directing of Blair towards linking his religious faith to politics. As Blair states:

'I am a Socialist not through reading a textbook that has caught my intellectual fancy, nor through unthinking tradition, but because I believe that, at its best, Socialism corresponds most closely to an existence that is both rational and moral. It stands for co-operation, not confrontation; for fellowship, not fear. It stands for equality, not because it wants people to be the same but because only through equality in our economic circumstances can our individuality develop properly.'⁷⁴⁸

Peter Mandelson says Blair's brand of socialism is classically based in the writers of political science, natural history and Fine Arts as much as it is in philosophy: 'His [Blair's] is an ethical socialism which draws on the ideas of Ruskin and Tawney.'⁷⁴⁹ The complex, disparate and protected origins and influences upon Blair in terms of his political introduction and development are conveyed in Mandelson's summary:

'An interviewer once accused Blair of holding opinions rather than convictions. 'Not true,' said Blair: 'I have core beliefs which take the form of strong left-of-centre values. With my class background if all I had wanted to

⁷⁴⁷ Seldon, Anthony. Ballinger, Chris. Collins, Daniel & Snowdon, Peter (2004: 32) Chapter 3, *quoting, New Statesman*, July 13, 1994

⁷⁴⁸ Tony Blair (06.07.1983) *Maiden Speech as MP for Sedgefield, House of Commons*, Hansard, 6th. Series, vol. 45, col. 316

⁷⁴⁹ Mandelson, Peter (2002: 32)

do was exercise power I could and would, let's be blunt about it, have joined another Party.'⁷⁵⁰

Mandelson concludes:

'What brought Blair into the Labour Party, unlike others who have risen to senior positions, was not a political family background or a conventional Labour apprenticeship in student activity, local government and trade unions, but the strength of personal convictions and his belief in what Labour stands for - fairness and social justice in society, partnership in managing economic and social problems, and greater individual opportunity for all.'⁷⁵¹

Anthony Seldon claims the combining of religion and politics into what became Blairism and essentially New Labour was in large part the result of 'key people.'⁷⁵² Cherie Booth certainly falls within that category.

Cherie Booth's deep Christian (Catholic) socialist convictions were steeped in the deprived working-class Catholic origins of her single-parent up-bringing and background. It is claimed Booth was an important influence on converting Tony Blair's convictions to socialism, in addition to the superior virtues of Catholicism in contrast to Protestantism. The origins of Booth's contribution to Blairism are argued to be located in the contrast between the privileged privately educated middle-class upbringing of Blair with that of Booth.' As Booth's biographer - Linda McDougall - says:

'She [Cherie Booth] was a deeply serious Catholic girl from Liverpool who had no money, had joined the Labour Party at sixteen, and knew that

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid., (2002: 32)

⁷⁵¹ Ibid., (2002: 32)

⁷⁵² Seldon, Anthony. Ballinger, Chris. Collins, Daniel & Snowdon, Peter (2004: iv)

everything you get in this world has to be earned through hard work. She wanted to become a barrister to put the world to rights....^{753 754}

Although the Labour Party has a lengthy Christian socialist tradition, Blair's overt religious convictions were not universally celebrated within Labour. However, he was far from isolated among his parliamentary colleagues. The Christian commonality that existed within Labour provided the basis for two important friendships after Blair's election to Parliament in 1983: in the first instance with Gordon Brown (with whom he shared a parliamentary office), and more importantly from 1992-1994, with the Labour leader John Smith. It was Smith in 1992 who had 'originally invited Blair to join the CSM [Christian Socialist Movement].'⁷⁵⁵ There was no doubt that Blair sought to promote his Christian values as a core component of modern Labour's socialism. While Shadow Home Secretary (1992-1994) in Smith's Shadow Cabinet, at the 1992 party conference he stated:

'We [the Labour Party] are trying to establish in the public mind the coincidence between the values of democratic socialism and those of Christianity. There is a desire in the Labour Party to rediscover its ethical values: the ethical code that most of us really believe gave birth to the Labour Party.'⁷⁵⁶

Whatever undercurrents of disquiet there may have been from the secularists in the Labour Party to the religious revivalism of Smith, Brown and Blair, they were largely silenced, or at least in part acquiesced as the party continued to progress in the

⁷⁵³ McDougall, Linda (2001: 63) *Cherie: The Perfect Life of Mrs Blair*, (London: Politico's)

⁷⁵⁴ Cherie Booth most direct reference to the Israel-Palestinian conflict occurred in June 2002 when commenting upon the latest event in a cycle of violence and counter-violence, in this instance, after a Palestinian suicide attack on an Israeli bus: 'As long as young people feel they have got no hope but to blow themselves up you are never going to make progress.' BBC News, *Prime Minister Wife in Suicide Bomb Row*, June 18, 2002, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/2051372.stm

⁷⁵⁵ Seldon, Anthony. Ballinger, Chris. Collins, Daniel & Snowden, Peter (2004: 517) Chapter 34, *God*

⁷⁵⁶ Ibid., (2004: 517) quoting, Michael Prescott, *Sunday Times*, October 10, 1992

opinion polls. Although Blair was apparently unabashed in presenting his religious beliefs in the context of his politics and the Labour Party at the 1992 conference, it was thought to be the direct intervention of Alistair Campbell - culminating in his 2003 infamous '*we don't do God*'⁷⁵⁷ exclamation - that gradually eroded much of the references in public to God after Blair became party leader and Prime Minister.⁷⁵⁸ Campbell's intervention reflected his perception of a broader electoral liability with a religious based campaign, and dissuaded Blair from quoting biblical references, God, or professions of his Christian faith. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to detect the religious connotations of Blair's addresses and how he relates these to his socialism, as this extract from a speech to the party conference in 1995 illustrates:

'I am worth no more than anyone else. I am my brother's keeper. I will not walk on the other side. We [are] members of the same family, the same community, the same race. This is my socialism.'⁷⁵⁹

Blair's biographer Anthony Seldon summarises Blair's religious faith and how this relates to his personal and political values and positions, in addition to those of other faiths:

'So Blair's religious beliefs are ecumenical, multi-faith and anti-fundamentalist but also judgemental. Indeed, it is the very clear division between good and evil that he learnt from Christianity that he sees as the principle uniting force behind all major world faiths. His is an intensely practical faith, not interested in doctrinal disputes, nor in dogma, nor in a

⁷⁵⁷ During a reply to an interview question regarding the significance of their Christian faith in the relationship between Tony Blair and George W. Bush to David Margolick, *Vanity Fair Magazine*, June 2003, Alistair Campbell replied 'I'm sorry. We don't do God.'

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2003/05/04/nblair04.xml>

⁷⁵⁸ Alistair Campbell's snuffing of Blair's Christianity, or any facet of the Labour leader's character which may be a potential electoral liability was the result of his experience as a political advisor to Neil Kinnock, and had significant influence upon the formation and reliance upon Blair's 'settee Cabinet' style of government.

⁷⁵⁹ Seldon, Anthony. Ballinger, Chris. Collins, Daniel & Snowdon, Peter (2004: 517) *quoting*, Tony Blair, Labour Party conference, 1995

world to come, but in this world now. His religious beliefs are closely intertwined with his ethical beliefs.’⁷⁶⁰

Adding:

‘He believes all world religions, correctly followed, lead to the same God . . . and that ‘religion should remain the bedrock of civilisation.’⁷⁶¹

The implications of Blair’s religious convictions were to be far-reaching, both in his foreign policy in general, and in his responses to what he viewed as the threat of political Islam. (His personal interest in Islam has a history that pre-dates 9/11 by many years: in an interview Blair described Islam as a ‘deeply reflective, peaceful and very beautiful religious faith and I think it would be hugely helpful if people from other religious faiths knew more about it.’⁷⁶²

Blair’s ascendancy to the office of Prime Minister in May 1997 gave him the opportunity to not only re-fashion Labour further, but to apply Blairism into the realm of international as well as domestic affairs.

1994-1997 Foreign Affairs and Policy - Old Labour and New Labour

Tony Blair’s lack of interest in foreign affairs and the entanglements they so frequently pose was not a singularly New Labour phenomenon. Labour’s traditional, almost ‘instinctive lack of interest in external relations,’⁷⁶³ continued under Blair’s leadership and in the years leading to the 1997 election, as Kinnock explains:

‘Well the first thing is that the characteristic of the phenomenon known as New Labour (whatever it is), was to down-play foreign politics. So they never

⁷⁶⁰ Ibid., (2004: 526-527)

⁷⁶¹ Ibid., (2004: 525) *quoting, The Times*, April 1, 2000

⁷⁶² Ibid., (2004: 525) *quoting, Muslim News*, March 2000

⁷⁶³ Kinnock, Neil (30.01.2004: 9)

took any notice of what was happening elsewhere, - even over the Channel. In government of course you have not got that luxury!’⁷⁶⁴

As with much of Tony Blair’s politics, his approach to foreign affairs was indelibly shaped by his negative experiences of the early 1980s. For Blair, foreign affairs in that period were not only stained by Labour’s misjudgement of the public mood over the Argentine invasion of the Falkland Isles,⁷⁶⁵ but just as importantly, remained synonymous with the more established but equally electorally ruinous causes of the left-wing: notably, anti-Americanism and unilateral nuclear disarmament, with the resulting and deeply damaging tag issued by the Conservatives and sections of the media that Labour was ‘soft’ on defence. The combined effect left Blair suspicious and cautious with an instinctive sense of unease on the subject of foreign affairs and the contentious issues it invariably appeared to generate while in opposition. But on entering government his position was dramatically reversed. In many ways, the timing of Blair’s arrival as Labour Leader in relation to international affairs could not have been more fortuitous. The unravelling of the Communist Bloc followed by the implosion of the Soviet Union irreparably altered the dynamic of world affairs to an unimaginable extent. As a result, Labour faced a world in which it is stated:

‘Particularly important is the ever increasing interdependence of the international system and the consequential blurring of boundaries between domestic and foreign policies.’⁷⁶⁶

⁷⁶⁴ Ibid., (30.01.2004: 8)

⁷⁶⁵ Morgan notes, that ‘British public opinion, which had known virtually nothing of the distant Falklands previously, except perhaps the appeal of its postage stamps to philatelists, was outraged,’ and in contrast to many perceptions of Labour’s stance, that ‘Foot’s speech, perhaps his last great parliamentary performance, galvanized the nation He was adamant the Falklanders should be defended and liberated. Patrick Cormack [Conservative] praised him strongly – ‘For once he spoke for Britain.’ Morgan, Kenneth O. (2007: 411-412)

⁷⁶⁶ Smith, Martin J. & Spear, Joanna (1992: 199) *Changing The Labour Party*, Chapter 13, Joanna Spear, *The Labour Party and Foreign Policy, Implementation of Labour Party Foreign Policy*, (London: Routledge)

In terms of Blairism and New Labour, the increasing role of the 'international system' - the United Nations, and to a lesser extent NATO and the EEC, - and the shifts in the dimensions and conduct of world affairs, meant that, to a greater extent than previously experienced, Labour's foreign policy commitments became one step removed from the direct responsibility. As the following quote illustrates:

'Several of the seemingly more intractable problems in the system are currently under negotiation; for example, disputes in . . . the Middle East . . . and this removes several potential problems from Labour's international agenda.'⁷⁶⁷

A greater emphasis upon the role of bodies like EEC, NATO and the UN relieved Labour from the thorny issues of stating detailed policy-position in the manifesto, in that a sentence referring to the goals of the EEC in foreign affairs would suffice, even if in government it became more difficult.

Irrespective of the changes inflicted by the end of the Cold War, two frequently asserted claims occur in almost all the accounts of Tony Blair's position on foreign affairs: that in comparison to the domestic agenda foreign affairs were a low priority; and that Blair had little interest and was ignorant and inexperienced. As a result, the overriding focus and primary policy emphasis prior to the 1997 General Election was placed on the domestic agenda, to the almost total exclusion of foreign affairs. This fact is exemplified in that foreign policy was only mentioned once by Blair in the pre-election campaign (*a campaign purposely directed at domestic issues which Labour perceived the electorate felt had been neglected by the Conservatives*), at the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, when Blair stated:

'Over the past six years we have seen a relentless decline in our effectiveness. Throughout this period the country has had no real foreign policy at all.'⁷⁶⁸

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid., (1992: 199)

⁷⁶⁸ Wickham-Jones, Mark (2000: 8) *New Labour's foreign policy. A new moral crusade?* Chapter 1, *Labour's Trajectory in foreign affairs: the moral crusade of a pivotal power?*,

As brief as the Bridgewater speech was, it is nevertheless significant in terms of its content and the inferences therein; although it hardly seems the place where history begins. Incorporating a firm commitment to the arms industry, and giving more than a hint that Labour would reverse John Major's position of 'presiding over the largest reduction in our military capacity' since 1945 (which Blair linked to 'national decline' and Britain's 'weakness' in the world), Blair also gave warning that this under emphasis was nonetheless likely to change under his premiership:

'I am a British patriot and I am proud to be a British patriot. I love my country. I will always put the interests of my country first. The Britain in my vision is not Britain turning back on the world - narrow, shy, uncertain. It is a Britain confident of its place in the world, sure of itself, able to negotiate with the world and provide leadership in the world. Century upon century it has been the destiny of Britain to lead other nations. That should not be a destiny that is part of our history. It should be part of our future. We are a leader of nations or nothing.'⁷⁶⁹

Kampfner quotes two Labour activists who attended the Manchester meeting: one of those attending noted 'the thing that attracted me about Blair was his intelligence and willingness to listen. The thing that alarmed me was his almost complete lack of knowledge of detail.'⁷⁷⁰ A fellow attendee said, 'He gave no impression of having a foreign policy philosophy worked out. His aim was to ensure that foreign affairs didn't become an election issue.'⁷⁷¹ ⁷⁷² Blair's conviction about avoiding foreign

quoting, Tony Blair *Speech: Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, April 21, 1997*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press)

⁷⁶⁹ Blair, Tony *Speech*, Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, April 21, 1997

⁷⁷⁰ Kampfner, John (2003: 10) Part 1, *Humanitarian Warrior*, Chapter 1, *Travelling Light*

⁷⁷¹ Ibid., (2003: 10)

⁷⁷² John Kampfner claims that in the weeks leading to the 1997 General Election Jonathan Powell (Blair's Chief-of-Staff 1997-2007 and former Foreign Office diplomat) organised a series of informal seminars to advance Blair's diplomatic skills and knowledge of foreign affairs. They included: Sir David Hannay (former Ambassador to the U.N.); Sir Robin Renwick (former Ambassador to Washington); Sir Roderic Braithwaite (Moscow and Major

issues was absolute, and on occasion, unforgiving.⁷⁷³ But however irrational and harsh his approach might be viewed, it was born of his own defining experiences of the 1980s and the influence of the left-wing and 'Red Ken' Livingstone's 'antics' that became a 'by-word for extremism and gesture rainbow politics'⁷⁷⁴ and condemned Labour in the process to a generation in opposition. But it also stemmed from the realist perspective and reality of the Labour Party electorate and their constituencies. Blair sensed that among the 'grass-roots' of the party - of which his Sedgefield, Durham mining constituency was representative of many - the primary issues were decidedly drawn from the domestic school of political thought. As Kampfner says, 'the talk in the pubs, clubs and local party committee meetings was not of Britain's nuclear deterrent, the collapse of Communism, or the fate of the Middle East.'⁷⁷⁵

Blair may have been resolutely fastidious and largely successful in steering New Labour away from engaging in foreign affairs in the years from July 1994, but, with the possibility of taking office looming, international politics became more difficult to avoid. However, as Kampfner says:

'Once in Downing Street, Blair was careful to stick to prevailing orthodoxies. The Foreign Office had had decades of experience in moulding ministers to its image. But an entire generation of diplomats had never worked with a Labour government.'⁷⁷⁶

advisor); Sir Michael Butler; Sir Nicholas Henderson; Raymond Seitz (former U.S. Ambassador to Britain); Timothy Garton Ash (Fellow of St. Anthony's College, Oxford); Lawrence Freedman (Prof. War Studies, King's College, London).

⁷⁷³ Ann Clwyd (Shadow Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs, 1994-1995) was the first person to be dismissed from Cabinet after travelling to Kurdish northern Iraq without Tony Blair's permission (April 1995). Labour's Foreign Policy Commission (LFPC) Robin Cook (Shadow Foreign Secretary and Head of the Commission) was to formulate policy over the first term, but Blair's closest advisor and assistant was the former Washington diplomat Jonathan Powell.

⁷⁷⁴ Rentoul, John (2001: 92)

⁷⁷⁵ Kampfner, John (2003: 7)

⁷⁷⁶ Ibid., (2003: 11)

This would not have been difficult, given Blair's own almost complete lack of experience in foreign affairs. Not only had he not served on any Parliamentary Committee on foreign affairs, 'he was taking charge of Britain's role in the world with less foreign policy knowledge or experience than almost any incoming Prime Minister since the Second World War.'⁷⁷⁷ The position and outlook for foreign affairs was not much brighter amid Blair's own political advisors. Two of Blair's closest and most trusted political advisors - Alistair Campbell (Head of Communications) and Anji Hunter - Blair's 'Special Assistant'⁷⁷⁸ - considered their role was to keep Blair and New Labour focused on domestic 'middle England' issues; apart from Jonathan Powell the only other guiding arm within the inner-circle in foreign affairs came generally from Peter Mandelson.

During the 1997 general election campaign foreign affairs were allocated a lowly listing in the priorities. This extended to the briefest of references in the Labour Party manifesto, which essentially reiterating the 1992 position that Britain would strive to be a 'force for good in the world.'⁷⁷⁹ Of a document comprising over 17,000 words, only 450 were devoted to what could be termed foreign affairs. New Labour's first published foreign affairs programme was ordered under sub-headings and couched in language relating as much to Britain's interests as those elsewhere. The manifesto included a call for the 'substantial reform of the United Nations,' and stated, 'Labour wants Britain to be respected in the world for the integrity with which it conducts its foreign relations' and that 'the protection and promotion of human rights a central part of our foreign policy. We will work for the creation of a permanent international criminal court to investigate genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.'

Concluding:

'Labour has traditionally been the Party of internationalism. A new Labour government will . . . restore Britain's pride and influence as a leading force for

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid., (2003: 8)

⁷⁷⁸ Rentoul, John (2001: 92)

⁷⁷⁹ Labour Party Manifesto (1997) *New Labour: Because Britain Deserves Better* (Labour Party) See: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/election97/background/parties/manlab/4labmanecon.html>

good in the world. Britain could once again be at the centre of international decision-making instead of at its margins.’⁷⁸⁰

The manifesto not only reflects the dramatic changes that have occurred after the collapse of the Communist bloc and the Cold War, with an emphasis on the role and influence of international and regional organs - UN, NATO and EEU - but also reflecting Blair and New Labour’s mission to avoid international issues, and thereby dilute the risk of being identified and caught in foreign entanglements.

Foreign Policy Under New Labour in Government, 1997-2001

‘It is some feat to go to war five times in six years. No British Prime Minister and few world leaders come close

What is it about this deeply Christian man that has given him such a taste for war?’⁷⁸¹

Whatever the numerous and complex reasons for avoiding the subject and related issues of foreign affairs before Labour came to government in 1997, there was certainly little evidence of the aversion to international events throughout the first Labour administration (May 1997-May 2001).

The reasons for the dramatic shift in Blair and New Labour’s position were in large part the political realities that distinguish the role of the government in contrast to that of an opposition party; in opposition there is little emphasis or responsibility towards wider British national and strategic interests and every emphasis upon party and domestic issues. However, the answer to the underlying basis to Kampfner’s question as to why a ‘deeply Christian man’ who was so determined to avoid such foreign entanglements came to assert himself and New Labour so readily and frequently to the theatre of foreign affairs, is in part located - as already explained - in the background of Blair’s religious and political development. A further important factor in creating

⁷⁸⁰ Labour Party Manifesto (1997)

⁷⁸¹ Kampfner, John (2003: Front End, Leaf Cover)

this shift on attaining government was generated by another major *internal determinant* - the appointment of Robin Cook.⁷⁸²

Blair's First Foreign Secretary: Robin Cook

For a Labour leader who had taken 'pathological care'⁷⁸³ to avoid controversy - and controversy from foreign affairs in particular - while in opposition, Blair's appointment of the moderate left-wing figure Robin Cook as Foreign Secretary and the immediate approval of the radical Mission Statement had on first impressions all the hallmarks of the political suicidal tendencies of the 1980s. Although the Mission Statement was the corporate 'big idea' concept of David Matheison,⁷⁸⁴ it was tailored and fashioned to address both Blair and Cook's personal approaches to politics and world affairs. In many ways the statement was simply an extension of the reform and modernisation process Blair had applied across other areas of Labour and government. The establishment of the Department for International Development (DfID) and the energetic and enthusiastic direction of Labour towards the EEC and NATO were all significant changes in emphasis and position for Labour and Britain; as was the appointment of the Labour related figure Baroness Symons⁷⁸⁵ to head a review of the Foreign Office.

⁷⁸² Robert "Robin" Cook (b.1946-d.2005) MP: (Edinburgh Central, 1974-1983), Livingston, 1983-2005); Shadow Foreign Secretary, 1994-1997, Foreign Secretary, 1994-2001)

⁷⁸³ Anthony Seldon [Editor] (2001: 331) *The Blair Effect: The Blair Government 1997-2001*, Chapter 16, Christopher Hill, *Foreign Policy*, (London: Little, Brown & Company)

⁷⁸⁴ David Matheison first came to Robin Cook's attention in 1987 while Matheison was an assistant researcher to Frank Dobson. Although convention allows ministers to assign two advisors - David Clark (Europe) Andrew Hood (international) also accompanied Cook - Matheison had been persuaded to join Cook in 1995; with a law degree and a PhD in Labour Party history he was commissioned by Cook as a spin-doctor (opposition) and political advisor (government).

⁷⁸⁵ Elizabeth Symons (b.1951) (Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean, 1996) former trades union leader, appointed a Junior Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (1997-1999), Minister of State for Defence Procurement (1999), and Minister of State for the Middle East in 2003.

On May 12th, Robin Cook addressed an audience of 'the great and the good from embassies and think tanks',⁷⁸⁶ and the media in the Locarno Room of the Foreign Office, with an introduction to New Labour's approach to foreign policy. Echoing Labour's 1997 General Election manifesto, - and sniping at the perception of the disrepute the Conservatives had bestowed on international affairs - Cook stated Britain would once again be a 'force for good in the world.' This was to be achieved via 'four goals' of New Labour's foreign policy strategy, as Cook stated: 'They provide the Labour government's contract with the British people on foreign policy':

'The first goal of foreign policy is security for nations. Our security will remain based on the North Atlantic Alliance. The Labour Government will give a new momentum to arms control and disarmament. We have already made a start with our joint statement for a total ban on landmines; 2). The prosperity of Britain is the next goal of our foreign policy. More people than ever before in Britain's long history as a trading nation depend on our exports to other countries or on investment from them into our own country; 3). The quality of life in Britain must also be an objective of our foreign policy.'⁷⁸⁷

Although most of the goals were firmly planted on the pre-election preamble on foreign affairs, it was the fourth goal which had never previously been muted that was to cause Cook, Blair and New Labour so many difficulties:

'4). Britain also has a national interest in the promotion of our values and confidence in our identity. That is why the fourth goal of our foreign policy is to secure the respect of other nations for Britain's contribution to keeping the peace of the world and promoting democracy around the world. The Labour Government does not accept that political values can be left behind when we check in our passports to travel on diplomatic business.'⁷⁸⁸

⁷⁸⁶ Kampfner, John (1998: 133) *Robin Cook*, Chapter 10, *Flying Start*, (London: Victor Gollancz)

⁷⁸⁷ The Mission Statement,

http://www.guardian.co.uk/ethical/article/0,,192031,00.html#article_continue

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid.

Cook continued:

‘Our foreign policy must have an ethical dimension and must support the demands of other peoples for the democratic rights on which we insist for ourselves. The Labour Government will put human rights at the heart of our foreign policy and will publish an annual report on our work in promoting human rights abroad.’⁷⁸⁹

Although the text clearly stated an ‘ethical dimension’, the media and opposition interpreted the phrase to mean that Britain and New Labour was to pursue an ‘ethical foreign policy,’ which is notably different. While Cook and Blair explained that ethics would only be included as a component of decision and policy-making in foreign affairs, and denied the statement had ever intended to suggest Labour had adopted an ‘ethical foreign policy,’ the term - particularly with the assistance of Labour’s political opponents - quickly became common currency.

While the Mission Statement initiative more generally possessed the potential to generate controversy, the reality is that a number of the key issues referenced were being driven by significant sections of the electorate: the subject of land-mines (raised in profile as a result of Cambodia, Afghanistan and the involvement of Diana, Princess of Wales) led the way, suggesting a public consensus that human rights, arms sales and international development were all subjects requiring greater government attention. This shift in public and therefore government emphasis had been stimulated by both the changes arising from the end of the Cold War, the Gulf War (1990-1991) and the negative perceptions of the Conservatives as a result of the ‘Arms for Iraq’ affair - from which Labour had benefited so much - in addition to the legacies and ongoing conflicts in East Timor, Chechnya or Tiananmen Square. These factors were evident motivations for New Labour’s statement, particularly when combined with the eroding of the distinction between domestic and foreign affairs caused by developments in the global economy and international community era.

⁷⁸⁹ Ibid.

It was against this international background and British public opinion that the Mission Statement was launched, along with the continuing conflicts in the Balkans and Iraq that were also influencing both government and the electorate alike. Nevertheless, the inclusion of an ethical dimension remained an intrinsically New Labour approach to foreign decision and policy-making, and a major innovation. As the academic Christopher Hill says:

‘The attempt to base foreign policy explicitly on ‘ethics’ is in itself something of a revolution. Previous governments, while always in practice having to balance prudential and ethical considerations, have always preferred to do so behind the screen of a theoretically bland pragmatism, whereby interests have been deemed eternal and ideas a fatal distraction.

Robin Cook (for it is not clear how far the Prime Minister shared his wish to go public on this matter, and so soon) was determined that foreign policy should face the new ‘realities’ of on the one hand an increasingly blurred line between the domestic politics of particular countries and the problems of the international system, and on the other the pressure from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for Britain to take a moral stand on issues such as arms sales and foreign dictatorships. The Foreign Secretary also clearly believed personally that it was right that the balance should tilt in favour of what he terms ‘progressive’ causes and away from purely inter-state considerations.’⁷⁹⁰

One of the defining characteristics of Blair - and thus New Labour’s approach to foreign affairs and the related business of decision and policy-making - was that neither ideology nor personal prejudice should be allowed to hinder initiatives and the mechanism for debate and negotiations. As David Mencer explains:

‘New Labour was about not being tied down by dogma; it was essentially, or at least as far as Blair was concerned, about dealing with the world as it is, rather than how you would wish it to be.’⁷⁹¹

⁷⁹⁰ Anthony Seldon [Editor] (2001: 332) Chapter 16

⁷⁹¹ Mencer, David (03.06.2004: 2)

This philosophical approach was a core feature of the first foray into affairs involving significant foreign interests for Blair and New Labour: the Northern Ireland Peace Process and Good Friday Agreement.⁷⁹² It was a classic Third Way non-ideological initiative and ultra-pragmatic approach. Blair, Mo Mowlam (Secretary of State for Northern Ireland), the Irish government and politicians on both sides of the sectarian divide in Northern Irish politics placed aside some of the most orthodox ideologies of Unionism and Republicanism in order to attain a negotiated settlement.

As a test-bed for New Labour and Blairism the central tenet to the approach by Tony Blair lay in accepting the 'existing realities as opposed to what they preferred to exist,' as unpalatable as that may be. Nevertheless, there were elementary pre-conditions: the parties concerned - *Sinn Féin* and the Loyalists, - had renounced terrorism and a ceasefire was in place; a massive economic and financial development and investment package reflecting the Rita Hinden doctrine and the inclusion of Senator George Mitchell were all prerequisites to the talk's commencement, and arguably, ultimately their success. Additional contributory factors were undoubtedly the application of ultra-pragmatism and the Blair style of unstructured and informal 'settee' or 'kitchen' Cabinets - as they became known. Although regular formal Cabinet sessions took place, specific subject issues were more frequently addressed among a close circle of Cabinet figures, advisors and officials. While a less formal Cabinet decision and policy-making model relinquished many of the restraints imposed by the traditional 'checks and balances' of a more robust - yet arguably - rigid full Cabinet structure, imbued with the collective responsibility ethos, the less formal model did hold its dangers. The academic political historian - Peter Hennessey

⁷⁹² The Good Friday [Belfast] Agreement (April 10, 1998) was signed by the British and the Republic of Ireland governments, and most of the political parties in Northern Ireland. The agreement established a framework for a democratic and peaceful power-sharing forum in Northern Ireland. Although the foundations of the agreement were achieved during John Major's Premiership, the Easter signing was viewed as a lesson in Third Way ultra-pragmatism.

- conveys an opinion that 'command and control would be the Blair style in government.'⁷⁹³ Adding in an analysis:

'Tony Blair and his inner group of advisors seemed determined to operate from within No. 10, once they got there, as they had within the Labour Party - driving policy and presentation from the centre around a core of delivery musts, and brooking no serious resistance either from minister, ministerial colleagues or from cumbersome, traditional government mechanics.

The one great exception to this was the Chancellor of the Exchequer-in-waiting, Gordon Brown. It was plainly going to be a centre-driven administration with the 'centre,' as later defined publicly by Tony Blair, as "my own office, the Cabinet Office and the Treasury."⁷⁹⁴

Despite the inherent risks of deviating from more traditional Cabinet practices, what the Belfast Agreement example emphasises in terms of Blair's personal philosophy, is that the 'result justified the means.' Although in its simplest analogy he was a 'fresh face to an age-old problem' Blair displayed an inexhaustible belief in himself, his personable charm, as well as a belief that given the right people and conditions a positive result can be achieved. As Kampfner elaborates:

'Part of it is very simple, but I don't mean that necessarily pejoratively, linear view about problem solving; he [Blair] took that with him to Northern Ireland; the Good Friday Agreement,⁷⁹⁵ in many ways attributed to his sense of exaggerated powers of persuasion. From that I think he genuinely took with him through all areas of life, including the Middle East, this sense that reasonable men and women, if put in a room together, can strike deals, a very

⁷⁹³ Hennessy, Peter. (2000: 477) *The Prime Ministers: The Office and its Holders Since 1945*, Chapter 18, *Command and Control: Blair, 1997-*, (London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press)

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid., (2000: 477) referring, House of Commons *Official Report*, 28 July, 1998

⁷⁹⁵ Good Friday Agreement: See: Mowlam, Mo (2002) *Momentum: The Struggle for Peace, Politics and the People*, Chapter 6, *The Hand of History, Talks Progressing*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton)

simple, straight forward view, and he couldn't ever quite understand it when people didn't see it in those terms. It must be said that back in those days, his own bargaining power was so much greater, because his authority domestically and internationally was so much greater, the two obviously go hand-in-hand.'⁷⁹⁶

Northern Ireland was a particular challenge for Blair: not just politically, but as a personal anathema. It was a quintessential example of the consequences of ideological dogma, sectarianism and confrontation with the disastrous social, economic and political repercussions. To Blair the conflict was an obscene manifestation born of tribalism and a blind loyalty to political and religious orthodoxy; the demonstrations and paraphernalia of banners depicting reverence to past conflicts bore echoes of the British class-war mentality and extremism of the left-wing 'one-book brigades' that penetrated Labour and the unions, amid the open conflict of the miner's strike (1984-1985). As such, Good Friday was as much about Blair as it was about politics.

Blair would attempt to approach to the Israel-Palestinian conflict using the tried and tested model applied in Northern Ireland: setting the conditions of an end to violence and terror, with a core Hindenite economic aid and investment emphasis, but essentially modelled on external in-formal negotiating figures like Michael Levy⁷⁹⁷ and the notion that good people - moderate progressives - sat round a table can reach an agreement. Before Blair became overly engaged in the Middle East, a conflict and humanitarian crisis closer to home came to consume much of his interest in foreign affairs.

If Northern Ireland illustrated one key plank of Blairism in affairs with significant foreign interests, the Yugoslavia-Serbia-Kosovo War⁷⁹⁸ exemplified the other major

⁷⁹⁶ Kampfner, John (05.12.2003: 1) *Interview: Kampfner-Nelson*, St. Pancras, London

⁷⁹⁷ Michael Abraham Levy [Baron Levy, 1997] (b.1944) is a Labour related figure; Levy was formerly chief fund-raiser for the Labour Party; Gordon Brown's appointee Michael Williams replaced Levy as Middle East envoy after nine years in September 2007.

⁷⁹⁸ During the Yugoslav/Serbian-Kosovo conflict (1996-1999) Serbian forces were deemed to have violated human rights and humanitarian law in Kosovo. Given Kosovo was a semi-

tenet of Tony Blair and New Labour's approach to international decision and policy-making: the Doctrine of Humanitarian Intervention (DHI). Blair first propounded the DHI in April 1999.⁷⁹⁹ The doctrine was viewed in some quarters as Blair's attempt to recover the initiative in foreign affairs - achieved by Robin Cook's 1997 Mission Statement - by asserting his own identity and position. Similarities between the Mission Statement - with its assertion that ethics should be a consideration in foreign decision and policy-making - and the DHI are located in the innovative - if not unique - affirmation that the hitherto sacrosanct principle of the sovereignty of states be challenged and overridden in the interests of averting a humanitarian calamity. The additional emphasis upon the use of regional and international organs (EEC, NATO, and United Nations) to intervene in cases of humanitarian issues was also revelatory in terms of the norms and practices of post-1945 era of international relations and international law to protect sovereign of states to address internal affairs without interference from external powers.

Blair's doctrine reflected his personal attitude to international affairs: his belief in the pillars of natural justice and liberal and humanitarian interventionism which are not necessarily based on the protection or related to British national interests. Although as Kampfner somewhat wryly notes: 'national interests were never harmed by a more stable and 'better world.'⁸⁰⁰ The use of intervention in the pursuit of justice - beyond

autonomous area of Serbia, within the context of international law it was viewed by the UN as an internal affair; as such, NATO's intervention - although supported by the United States - was viewed as external interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign nation State. Tony Blair, Bill Clinton and NATO justified the intervention on the grounds of stemming a humanitarian emergency and potential catastrophe.

⁷⁹⁹ Tony Blair unveiled the Doctrine of the International Community before the Chicago Economic Club, USA (April 22, 1999) at which he detailed the concept that on humanitarian ground the international community, in contrast to orthodox doctrine of non-intervention in the internal affairs of a sovereign state - advocated it was right and a collective duty to intervene. It was based on the post-Cold War realities of a global economy and interdependency in which issues and conflict cannot be viewed or acted upon in isolation, as a bloc or ideological interest, but as a concern of all governments and states. Blair cited the enduring conflict and 'ethnic cleansing' in Kosovo as a prime example.

⁸⁰⁰ Kampfner, John (05.12.2003: 2)

national interests - is an example of an 'over-lap' between Blair's more realists position regarding an 'ethical dimension' to foreign policy, and that of the more idealist position held by the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook. As Kampfner underlines:

'It was the willingness to use force and to threaten the use of force with a view to that threat being carried out, for what were believed to be altruistic ends, . . . part of that was just a reworking of global politics after the cold war, but part of it was derived from a biblical view of - not might being right, but when you were right being able to use your might, and that was really what Tony Blair took with him as his template in looking at everything, and it applied across the board.'⁸⁰¹

In terms of an analysis of what the Kosovo example says about Blair and New Labour's concept of foreign policy approaches in the context of humanitarian interventionism, Peter Hennessy suggests:

"It underlined the blend of custom and practice and the desire for smaller, leaner decision-taking patterns. As one careful observer expressed it:

Although the operation showed the PM's preference for operating on a daily basis in small groups, it also showed the endurance of the entrenched constitutional system whereby the "inner war cabinet" was linked continuously by less frequent meetings of DOP [Defence and Overseas Policy] and the Cabinet itself overseeing a variety of subjects-specific official groups.'⁸⁰²

Hennessy concludes:

⁸⁰¹ Ibid., (05.12.2003: 2)

⁸⁰² Hennessy, Peter (2000: 506) *quoting*, Hennessy, Peter (1999), *The Importance of Being Tony: Two Years of the Blair Style*, the Lord Mayor's Lecture, July 12, 1999, (London: Guy's & St. Thomas Hospital Trust), p.15

‘In terms of the wider picture of the Blair style, the Balkans War had another impact which cut against the norms of the ‘entrenched constitutional system’ based on collective government.’⁸⁰³

It would be as easy as it is tempting given Blair’s overt Christian faith and his proven willingness to translate this into an applied politics to attribute much of the content of the DHI to his religious zeal. Firstly that would be too simplistic and largely unwarranted, and secondly politically irresponsible in the context of the glaring scrutiny such a policy would attract on an international stage. As Christopher Hill says, ‘although its centrepiece is an attempt to rewrite the ‘Just War’⁸⁰⁴ doctrine for the new millennium,’⁸⁰⁵ the substance of the doctrine was clearly an attempt to address certain post-Cold War realities - the mutual dependency of states and their national interests in a global economy, which could only realistically be addressed via international diplomatic and practical co-operation.

Conclusion

⁸⁰³ Ibid., (2000: 506)

⁸⁰⁴ The conceptual origins of a ‘Just War’ theory lie as much in ancient Greek and Mediaeval political and theological philosophy as it does in the more modern notions of natural justice and ethics argued to underpin political and international politics. The earliest recorded exponent of the ‘Just War’ theory comes from Saint Augustine (*Aurelius Augustinus*, Augustin of Hippo [Algeria] b.354-d.430) whose fourth century writing establishes a centre-ground between absolute pacifism - enshrined in the Christian tradition - with the overt conquestal imperialism represented by ancient Rome. Augustine’s theory has been interpreted to provide various and variable justifications for the use of war including Pope Urban II medieval crusade against the Muslims in Jerusalem (1095-1099) and the war against Nazi Germany by the Christian and secular pacifist movement. Blair’s motivation for intervention in Kosovo are argued to contain a religious crusading context: ‘We are succeeding in Kosovo because this was a moral cause . . . We can then embark on a new moral crusade to rebuild the Balkans. . . . Crusade. He was entirely at ease with the word.’ Kampfner, John (2003: 60) Chapter 3, *Most Moral of Wars?*, quoting, Tony Blair [source not cited], (London: Free Press)

⁸⁰⁵ Anthony Seldon [Editor] (2001: 340) Chapter 16

Tony Blair's more determined, almost driven approach towards the reform and modernisation of the Labour Party - exceeding that of Neil Kinnock or John Smith - resulted largely from his experience of old Labour at the hands of the left-wing of the party in the early 1980s, and a series of four general election defeats that occurred as a consequence. The need to eradicate these catastrophic events from Blair's own conscience, as well as that of the party, also extended to addressing the collective memory of the electorate as a vital prerequisite to Labour regaining political power in order to effect change on British society. The efforts to exorcise these early political experiences also shaped Blair's personal philosophy and New Labour's political agenda throughout his term as leader of the opposition, and then his first term as Prime Minister.

Blair's socialism, as with his political philosophy generally, Blairism, is a curious and arguably unique blend of personal background and early life-experience imbued with the values and benefits of the welfare state, combined with his deep Christian faith. In that sense it is certainly a form of Christian socialism. But for Blair, his Christian socialist beliefs did not translate into the traditional rigid application of socialism into the decision and policy-making mechanisms as enshrined in the historical constitutional orthodoxy of the party's socialist constitution, or the dogmatic adherence to established methodologies that, in his view, should be diverse and negotiable. The core of Blair's Christian socialism lies in the meticulous identification and vehement commitment to a core set of socialist values and principles - as with his religious faith - that remain as permanent as they are universal. But the crucial difference in Tony Blair's philosophical brand of Christian socialism - Blairism - lies in the belief that the mechanism for achieving socialist aims is largely immaterial - as located in the origins, basis and application of his ultra-pragmatism; what is really at issues is the set of values upon which that mechanism is based, not how it is achieved; within Blairism those values are as Christian as they are socialist.

Tony Blair's personal blend of Christian socialist encapsulated in his core values and multi-dimensional approach identified in his ultra-pragmatism was as notable in both the inclusion of an 'ethical dimension' to foreign affairs as it was in the 'Just War' basis of the Doctrine of Humanitarian Intervention. The mechanism for pursuing the application of these values in the international environment lay for Blair in the

employment of special advisors and reforms directed at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the EEC, and ultimately, NATO and the UN; reforms which would facilitate breaking the moulds and established taboos that emulated from concepts like the primacy of national interests and the inviolability of sovereign states. Dealing with the world as it is, rather than as one might wish it to be and progressing a value-laden agenda through pragmatic and where necessary, ultra-pragmatic means, was the piston-engine at the centre of Blair's approach to foreign affairs and policy-making. His personal authority within the party (which stemmed principally from his ability to win elections) combined with his 'command-and-control' and 'kitchen-cabinet' style of policy decision-making, meant that his vision increasingly dominated New Labour policy-making, particularly once government had been attained, decisions and policy determined.

Chapter 6

The New Labour Party's First Government and the *Essential Dilemma* (1997-2001)

Introduction

This chapter will examine the policies of New Labour's first government, under Tony Blair, towards political Zionism and the Israel-Palestinian question. It will explore the *internal* and *external determinants* which shaped policies and helped determined a subtle shift in the policy trajectory, while remaining aware of the seminal evidence derived from the previous chapter: that the one overarching determinant was Tony Blair himself, his political philosophy, Blairism, and its implications for international affairs, foreign decision and policy-making in general.

One key *internal determinant*, and one which had impacted upon Labour policy responses to the core components of the *essential dilemma* in previous eras, was the requirement to formulate policy as a party of government. The personal, ideological and political intricacies embedded within the internal Labour divisions among key leading Labour figures, including Blair, his Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, and his Chancellor, Gordon Brown are important factors in this equation as Labour was again required to balance national and strategic interests with ideologically based policy commitments, and personal positions. So too was the role and influence of key Labour MPs such as Peter Mandelson and Labour-related figures like Alistair Campbell and Michel Levy on whom Blair depended, and who enabled him to frequently bypass conventional cabinet and FCO structures. Additionally, the necessities of recapturing and retaining the votes of key minority communities such as the Jewish community after decades of mistrust of Labour left-wing extremism were also a factor. The application of Tony Blair's pragmatism arrived simultaneously with the more general discrediting of socialism in favour of social democracy within the party, and a corresponding transformation of Labour's status from a party in the 'pockets of the

trades unions' to the 'party of big business.'⁸⁰⁶ Within this contextual climate ideological dogma was all but abandoned in favour of a 'sit down and talk it out' approach to foreign policy. The reform and modernisation process of the party that continued unabated throughout was thus an *internal determinant* of on-going significance.

Among the numerous *external determinates*, the most important was clearly the Middle East peace process which resulted from the 1993 Oslo Accords.⁸⁰⁷ The subsequent peace process presented Labour with an opportunity to move to a more balanced policy position, and in doing so, abandon its traditional general pro-political Zionist/Israel policy trajectory. This shift to an overtly neutralist position was made possible by the partial reconciliation of the main protagonists (Israel and the Palestinians) that provided Labour with the opportunity to largely detach itself from the constraints and contradictions generated by Labour's historic relationship with political Zionism - founded on *common origins* - and which had found expression in the *essential dilemma*. Given that both Israel and the PLO had established a detailed agreement and plan, Oslo also allowed Labour to avoid awkward detailed policy commitments emanating from the historical contradicting perspectives which often offended the Palestinians and/or Israel, and sections of the party itself, by basing its policies on those formulated by the peace process. Furthermore, in the wake of the global decline of Eastern European and Russian 'socialism' - as previously noted, 'socialism' is hardly universally agreed to be a given ideology or phenomenon, - Oslo as an example of post-Cold War pragmatism of the international system further provided the foundations for the application of Tony Blair's personal philosophy - Blairism.

⁸⁰⁶ See: Osler, David (2002) *Labour Party PLC: New Labour as a Party of Business*, Chapter 3, *Entrepreneurs' Champion: The Birth of Blairism*, (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing)

⁸⁰⁷ The Oslo Accords (Declaration of Principles (DOP) on Interim Self-Government Arrangements) was a negotiated agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). Though drafted in Oslo, Norway (August 1993) the agreement was signed in Washington (September 13, 1993) by Mahmoud Abbas (PLO Official) and Shimon Peres (Israel Foreign Minister); Warren Christopher (U.S. Secretary of State) and Andrei Kozyrev (Russian Foreign Minister 1990-1996) were witnesses. President Bill Clinton, Yasser Arafat (PLO Chairman) and Yitzhak Rabin (Israel Prime Minister) were in attendance.

Tony Blair's position towards Israel and the Palestinians

The previous chapter conveyed the assertion that prior to and upon becoming Prime Minister Tony Blair had little or no interest in foreign affairs. As David Mephram, Labour's Foreign Policy Advisor (1994-1997) conveys:

'The curious thing about Blair is that he had no foreign policy pre-1997. He had no interest in foreign policy. He gave one speech on foreign policy during the Labour Party election campaign in 1997 in Manchester, which was a dreadful speech. It was written for him by a chap called Jonathan Powell⁸⁰⁸ who is his Chief-of-Staff at number 10, formerly from the Foreign Office. I do not think it said anything about Israel-Palestine; I am sure it did not. It was a general statement about how he was patriotic, and Britain would be a great nation again; how we must have strong armed forces and never be weak on defence, and all that rubbish that they needed to say to get elected. And that was the only statement he made on foreign policy in pre-1997.'⁸⁰⁹

It is argued that one of the primary reasons for Blair's limited interest was his confidence in his choice of Robin Cook as Foreign Secretary. As Mandelson and Liddle state:

'Blair is very interested in foreign affairs, but he will not want these to crowd out his domestic agenda - especially when, in Robin Cook, he has a prospective foreign secretary in whom he has complete confidence.'⁸¹⁰

⁸⁰⁸ Seldon says of Jonathan Powell: 'His value to Blair stemmed from his lack of any personal or political agenda. . . . Powell's ability to merge himself into Blair's persona is indeed striking. 'You know when you are dealing with him that he's inside the mind of Blair,' said one Whitehall insider. 'When he speaks, it is Blair's voice you are hearing.' Seldon, Anthony. Ballinger, Chris. Collins, Daniel & Snowdon, Peter (2004: 345) Chapter 24, *Jonathan Powell, The Impact of Jonathan Powell*

⁸⁰⁹ Mephram, David (14.12.2005: 4) *Interview: Mephram-Nelson*, Covent Garden, London

⁸¹⁰ Liddle, Roger & Mandelson, Peter (1996: 245) *The Blair Revolution: Can New Labour Deliver?* (London: Faber & Faber)

However, the key to understanding that appointment lay in Blair's relationship with his Chancellor, Gordon Brown. It had been the objections from Brown to the appointment of Robin Cook - 'Brown's great rival in Cabinet'⁸¹¹ - to any key domestic post that effectively consigned Cook to the post of Foreign Secretary,⁸¹² in part, an effort to protect the Chancellor's prudent domestic economic plans from a known left-wing figure. Similarly it was Brown who came to increasingly squeeze Blair's more radical and financially costly domestic agenda, gradually directing him into the international arena as Brown pushed to control spending and taxation - the perennial concern of a Labour Party and Chancellor scarred from the 1980s 'tax and spend' label applied by the Conservatives and right-wing press to Labour's left-wing public spending policies.

Differences between Blair and Brown emerged almost immediately after the election. Seldon claims that 'tensions quickly arose between Number 10 over the conduct of business. Very soon after the election, key figures in Number 10 were complaining they were being frozen out.'⁸¹³ Although Blair and Brown had agreed to a two year spending freeze in 1997-1999, it was over Brown's extension of this control into a 'new three year planning cycle' in preparation for the General Election that serious

⁸¹¹ Routledge, Paul (1998: 296) *Gordon Brown: The Biography*, (London: Simon & Schuster)

⁸¹² While the post of Foreign Secretary remains one of the three great offices of state (along with Chancellor and Home Secretary) the excessive travel and distinctive non-domestic aspect has a tendency to distance a minister from colleagues, the workings of Cabinet and government. As such, the post of Foreign Secretary is far from universally welcomed. As Susan Crosland says of Anthony Crosland, 'as far as he was concerned, he didn't know anything about foreign affairs;' and quoting a Labour MP, that 'He was dropped from the skies into the FO.' Crosland, Susan (1982: 324) *Tony Crosland*, Chapter 38, *Learning To Live with One Another*, quoting, Bill McCarthy, (London: Jonathan Cape). On being invited by Prime Minister James Callaghan to report on events in foreign affairs, Crosland unapologetically replied "Nil!" Jefferys, Kevin (2000: 200) *Anthony Crosland*, quoting, Tony Benn's Diaries, April 13, 1976, p.557-558

⁸¹³ Seldon, Anthony. Ballinger, Chris. Collins, Daniel & Snowden, Peter (2004: 668) Chapter 40, *Gordon Brown, Cold War, 1997-2001*, Interview, Gavyn Davis, December 1, 2003

‘Differences emerged’ and although ‘Blair managed to win some arguments. . . . On most of the significant differences in the first term Brown carried the day.’^{814 815}

Gordon Brown’s approach to foreign affairs was almost entirely driven by the domestic agenda; when and where foreign affairs touched him at all, it was usually in terms of their economic influence and his more Christian-based concerns for Third World debt. Thus, despite the fact that Brown was widely known to be ‘more Atlanticist than Blair and a declared friend of Israel,’⁸¹⁶ it was Blair and Cook who drove Labour’s foreign policy. Blair’s delegation of foreign policy was gradually reversed as Brown progressively curtailed his domestic plans on the grounds of cost, and as the first years passed, increasingly on the basis of Brown’s resentment at being passed-over as party leader. As a consequence, Blair sought to carve an independent niche for himself from the financial restraints of the Chancellor in the sphere of international events and issues. Brown’s remoteness from the foreign-policy arena meant that Blair could out-manoeuvre Brown’s financial restraints often by presenting a situation as a *fait accompli*. As Anthony Seldon says, for example:

‘On Kosovo [1999], Brown was not persuaded of the case for involvement, and was then ‘deeply shocked’ when he learned that Blair had proposed to Clinton that the British pay one-third of the cost of the operation.’⁸¹⁷

On the subject of Israel and the Palestinians, Blair’s personal approach was determined by a number of key factors (A-E).

A. Rejection of Left-Wing radicalisation of the Party in the 1980s

Tony Blair’s biographer, John Kampfner, claims that for Blair the Palestinian issue was inextricably associated with the causes of the left-wing and far-left of the party in

⁸¹⁴ Ibid., (2004: 674-675) *Interview*, Charlie Whelan, November 10, 2003

⁸¹⁵ The Blair-Brown deal was not restricted to financial aspects: Blair also gave Brown substantial control over economic matters and through that influence over domestic affairs.

⁸¹⁶ Bower, Tom (2004: 450) *Gordon Brown*, (London: Harper Collins)

⁸¹⁷ Seldon, Anthony. Ballinger, Chris. Collins, Daniel & Snowdon, Peter (2004: 675-676) *Interview*, Charlie Whelan, November 10, 2003

the 1980s, and as such, was to be avoided as being radical and thus potentially alienating to the British electorate. Kampfner describes the basis of Blair's approach and thinking towards support for the Palestinian national movement among New Labour figures thus:

'Anyone going round with a Palestinian *Kaffiyah* scarf, all that kind of thing. It's this idea, this word that he bandies around, 'modern' and 'modernization', if only the Palestinians could, quote, "modernize," unquote, "then they would become less extreme," unquote, the Israelis would become less extreme and less defensive.'⁸¹⁸

Kampfner continues:

'Blair almost sees a westernized ultra-modernity as a route to cutting through a lot of problems. For example, one of the reasons he finds Northern Ireland so intractable is because of the old-fashioned feel of Unionism; a lot of Unionist communities in Northern Ireland feel like England in the 1950's, and Blair cannot handle things that do not feel modern.'⁸¹⁹

Kampfner says Blair also had a Hindenite notion that what essentially lay behind Palestinian disquiet was a lack of educational and economic opportunity. Blair had witnessed the deep, and at times, violent despair of the 1980s in Britain emulating from the industrial wastelands and inner-city slums, and therefore if training and investment were forthcoming - if Palestinians 'could go round with a 'lap-top'⁸²⁰ - the situation would be resolved.

The net result for Blair of these associations and perceptions was not so much the case that he was anti-Palestinian, just that he was anti-left-wing, and anti-anything that threatened New Labour's electoral credibility. Moreover, and again in reference to Northern Ireland, Blair found the subject generally, and many of the associated issues,

⁸¹⁸ Kampfner, John (05.12.2003: 5)

⁸¹⁹ Ibid., (05.12.2003: 5)

⁸²⁰ Ibid., (05.12.2003: 5)

an anathema. Aspects of the Israel-Palestinian conflict represented for Blair a non-progressive tribalism - 'stuck in the past' scenario. In essence, the conflict, as with the background to the Northern Ireland situation and the class-warfare mindset of old Labour in perpetual conflict between governments, business and the unions also revolted him. It was in many ways the very antithesis of 'the modern' and everything his philosophy stood for and sought to achieve. But what is clear also from these sources of influence, is that Blair evidently sees Israel as the democratic modern exemplar, and the Palestinians as the more reactionary, authoritarian and guilty partner in the predicament even within the frame of what became the 'both sides' analogy.

B: Blair's Personal Advisor, Peter Mandelson

Within the limited context of Blair's inner-Cabinet circle of political advisors, one of the relatively more informed Labour figures on foreign affairs and the Middle East - particularly among the junior generation - was Peter Benjamin Mandelson.⁸²¹ As a Minister without portfolio (1997-1998) with a long-standing position based on an even-handed approach, Mandelson was at the heart of the New Labour administration and its policy-making towards the Middle East.

It is said that if 'Tony Blair chose the Labour Party; Peter Mandelson was born into it . . . ordained by both birth and environment to be Labour.'⁸²² Possessing a first-rate Labour pedigree and invaluable experience of the television media, Mandelson had been Neil Kinnock's Director of Communications (1985) and had guided Labour through the reform and modernisation process under Kinnock, John Smith and Tony Blair. Labelled as the first 'Spin Doctor' and the 'Prince of Darkness' (a reference to his hovering in the shadows as opposed to the glaring spotlight of the press or conference rostrums), Mandelson is nevertheless viewed as one of the primary architects of New Labour, and to an extent in the casting of Blairism.

⁸²¹ Peter Benjamin Mandelson (b.1953) MP: (Hartlepool, 1992-2004), European Commissioner 2004-present; Communist Party member (1971). Born in London, Mandelson is Herbert Morrison's maternal grandson.

⁸²² Macintyre, Donald (2000: 1) *Mandelson and the Making of New Labour*, Chapter 3, *A Bourgeois at Heart, Tanzania, Oxford, 1972-1976*, (London: Harper/Collins Publishers)

Although an Oxford contemporary says Mandelson was ‘pretty Zionist’⁸²³ when he arrived at Oxford university, the people he was to meet in a very short period confirmed him as a resolute neutralist figure. He first travelled to the Middle East as a result of a chance meeting with Lord Caradon [Hugh Foot] via the Oxford United Nations Students’ Association. Caradon, through a contact in the Arab League, managed to organise a tour for Mandelson to the region in 1974. It was the experience of Lebanon and the predicament of the Palestinian refugees that solidified Mandelson’s neutralist position. As he says:

‘It is very strange to think that Israel does not accept the entity of the Palestinians and recognise the PLO. They are so obviously an entity and “national personality” and the PLO acts in such a responsible and authoritative manner here.’⁸²⁴

In Beirut, which Mandelson described sardonically as ‘this outpost of American imperialism,’⁸²⁵ he met David Gilmour (son of Sir Ian Gilmour⁸²⁶) and David Hirst⁸²⁷ before moving on to visit a Palestinian refugee camp. The experience evidently made an impression on the young Mandelson:

‘The conditions in these camps (and I went to a good one) are as gruesome as reported. Thousands of people living in unbearably cramped conditions, although things have improved in the last five years.

Of course they will not leave the camps until they are given the opportunity to return to Palestine. It is the middle-aged and younger ones who seem most

⁸²³ Ibid., (2000: 43) *quoting*, Dick Newby

⁸²⁴ Ibid., (2000: 44) *quoting*, Peter Mandelson

⁸²⁵ Ibid., (2000: 44)

⁸²⁶ Sir Ian Gilmour (b.1926-d.2007) Conservative MP: (1977-1992), House of Commons Spokesperson on Foreign Affairs, and understudy to Lord Carrington (Foreign Secretary 1979-1982), and President of Medical Aid for Palestinians (MAP) 1993-1996.

⁸²⁷ David Hirst was *The Guardian* Middle Eastern journalist, author *The Gun and the Olive Branch; The Roots of Violence in the Middle East*, (1977) (London: Faber & Faber)

committed to return to Palestine. They are good humoured, patient and with a will of steel. It is a desperate situation.’⁸²⁸

After completing his tour with visits to Jordan, Syria and Israel, and on returning to Oxford, Mandelson wrote an article in the ‘Viewpoint’ section of the *Jewish Chronicle* advocating an independent State of Palestine in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. As Mandelson’s biographer Macintyre concludes: ‘The journey dissipated what was left of the youthful Zionism identified by Nick Newby.’⁸²⁹

C: Labour Friends of Israel (LFI) and the Israeli Ambassador

As with many demographic and parliamentary generations of historic and contemporary Labour figures, Tony Blair had been identified and courted by British pro-Israel, Jewish figures and Israeli politicians from as early as 1987. Viewed as a potential leading figure within Labour, he was approached and introduced to the British Jewish community, the Labor Party of Israel, and Israel itself. These early associations had a profound affect - as they were intended to do - upon Blair’s personal perspective on the subject and issues of the Israel-Palestinian conflict. As foreign policy advisor to New Labour - David Mepham - says:

‘I think even before he became leader, Blair, from a couple of trips he had made to Israel (as many Labour MPs do, as guests of the Labour Friends of Israel [LFI]), they send these upwardly mobile young Labour MPs to Israel, take them around Israel and they all come back very pro-Israeli, and he was in that mould. Even though he did not know a lot of the detail, from the moment he became Labour leader he did not say much about it, he did not do much about it, he did not make any policy statements, but his instincts were obviously much more on the side of the Israelis than the Palestinians.’⁸³⁰

Although the main purpose of LFI, since its founding in 1957, was the introduction of Labour figures to Israel from a Labor Party of Israel perspective, its other main

⁸²⁸ Macintyre, Donald (2000: 45)

⁸²⁹ Ibid., (2000: 43-44)

⁸³⁰ Mepham, David (14.12.2005: 4)

function was to maintain, develop and secure additional links between the British Jewish communities, the Labor political establishment in Israel, and the British Labour Party. This was to be facilitated by key linking figures that included Moshe Raviv (Israeli Ambassador to Britain 1993-1998). Moshe Raviv claims that both Blair and Brown had been identified as potential Labour Leaders and advised that they be invited to Israel at the earliest opportunity:

‘When I left London as Minister Plenipotentiary in 1988, I recommended to my successor that two young Labour Members of Parliament, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, be invited to visit Israel at an early date.’⁸³¹

Raviv states that as a consequence of establishing early contacts and organizing visits to Israel, he developed a ‘good rapport with the Labour leaders, - John Smith and his successor Tony Blair,’⁸³² (although an account of Smith’s experience on a visit to Israel does not necessarily substantiate Raviv’s claim.)⁸³³ Raviv also states when and how the three key Labour figures (Blair, Brown and Cook) were directly introduced to the Israeli perspective with the Middle East Peace Process, which had begun with Oslo:

‘In the three years prior to the British elections in May 1997, the Labour leaders visited Israel and got acquainted at first hand with our leaders and with the problems of the peace process. These visits included Tony Blair, Lord Irvine of Lairg, Gordon Brown and Robin Cook.’⁸³⁴

The initial relationship with Moshe Raviv generated a general interest in Israel and the Middle East in Blair. With the increasing number and regularity of contacts as Blair advanced through the Labour Party ranks his introduction and interest led to a profound commitment to Israel, which was to be frequently expressed by Blair at the

⁸³¹ Raviv, Moshe (1998: 270) *Israel at Fifty: Five Decades of Struggle for Peace*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson)

⁸³² Ibid., (1998: 270)

⁸³³ See: Stuart, Mark (2005: 349-350) Chapter 23, *Stresses and Strains*

⁸³⁴ Raviv, Moshe (1998: 270)

annual party conferences. After Raviv's return to Israel in 1998 the role as main unofficial link between Blair, the British Jewish Community and the Labor Party in Israel passed to Michael Levy.⁸³⁵

The Labour related figure Michael Levy was appointed as Tony Blair's special advisor and envoy to the Middle East in 2002.⁸³⁶ As Blair's special advisor, Levy's primary expertise lay in the specific area of the British Jewish Communities and the Labor Party of Israel, and their perspective on the conflict with the Palestinians. Although Levy had known Blair since 1994, and had long-standing personal and professional connections with the British Jewish communities and organisational bodies (notably the Board of Deputies of British Jews and Labour Friends of Israel), and the Israeli Labor political figures,⁸³⁷ he had few if any additional areas of expertise relating to the Palestinians or the Middle East generally. Prior to his appointment as Envoy his main activity had been as a fund-raiser among the Jewish communities for Labour's election campaign. Whatever the origins, the significance and influence on Blair was varied and noted, as Kampfner states:

'Levy had two functions: one was fund raising, and the other was to school Blair in the intricacies of Middle Eastern politics.'⁸³⁸

And as David Mepham affirms, the primary functions of Levy to Blair and New Labour:

⁸³⁵ It is claimed Tony Blair first met Michael Levy at a London social event hosted by Gideon Meir (Deputy Director-General for Media and Public Affairs) and (Minister Plenipotentiary at the Israeli Embassy, London); Levy and Blair had a mutual acquaintance in Eldred Tabachnik QC (former President, Board of Deputies of British Jews) both of whom qualified at Derry [Lord] Irvine's Law Chambers. Irvine had provided legal advice to Labour regarding expelling Militant (1980s).

⁸³⁶ Michael Levy resigned his position as Special Advisor and Envoy to the Middle East on the June 27, 2007, the date Tony Blair relinquished his Premiership and passed the Labour Party leadership to Gordon Brown.

⁸³⁷ Daniel Levy (Michael Levy's son) has served as an advisor to Ehud Barak (Israeli Labor Prime Minister 1999-2001) and Yossi Beilin (Labor Deputy Foreign Minister 1999-2001).

⁸³⁸ Kampfner, John (05.12.2003: 3)

‘I do not know at what point Michael Levy - an interesting and important figure on this issue - came into the picture. He was basically just a friend of Blair who talked to him a lot about the Israeli-Palestinian question, and presumably influenced him a lot in terms of his thinking.’⁸³⁹

The appointment of Michael Levy was an unusual appointment in the sense that Levy had specific expertise in terms of Israel, but little wider expertise in the Middle Eastern region and foreign affairs generally; this key factor created a good deal of criticism. Watkins’ says of Levy and his appointment that his ‘sympathies are demonstrably pro-Israeli’ and that ‘his knowledge of the Middle East seems to be confined to association with a long list of Zionist and Israeli causes.’⁸⁴⁰ A second criticism was that Levy’s appointment further confirmed the suspicion that Blair was circumventing the conventional Cabinet and FCO roles in New Labour’s decision and foreign policy-making by utilizing a ‘settee cabinet’ to advance his own ultra-pragmatic approach. Watkins’ claims Levy was dispatched on ‘a series of visits to Arab heads of State, with instructions to report back directly to the Prime Minister - not the Foreign Secretary.’⁸⁴¹ Questions as to whom or what Levy represented and was ultimately responsible for, were an ongoing concern, combined with the fact that his qualifications and experience were entirely embedded in the Jewish and Israeli Labor Party, the fact that Levy was advising the British Prime Minister on one, if not *the* most sensitive and volatile issues in international affairs, and largely acting beyond the usual Cabinet structure, diplomatic channels and support networks located in the Foreign Secretary and his Office is also commented upon by the academic, Stuart Wavell:

‘Another paradox. Levy is a pillar of British Judaism and a leading international Zionist who has served as Blair’s special envoy to the Middle East, where he is credited with brokering talks between Palestinian and Israeli leaders - much to the irritation of British Foreign Secretaries such as Robin

⁸³⁹ Mepham, David (14.12.2005: 4)

⁸⁴⁰ Watkins, David (06.07.2003: 1)

⁸⁴¹ Ibid., (06.07.2003: 1)

Cook, who would not speak to him, and Jack Straw, who keeps his distance.’⁸⁴²

It may have been the combination of the lack of experience on Blair’s behalf in conjunction with the informal style in negotiating and policy-making formulating favoured by Blair that merged into the realm of ‘special advisors’ and Michael Levy in particular. As Kampfner states:

‘Blair has always operated through informal channels, in whatever form of policy, whether it was domestic or whatever, he doesn’t particularly like formal Cabinet Committee meetings, he likes dealing with ‘kitchen Cabinets’ and individual people doing “jobs” unquote for him, so Michael Levy worked rather like the role of Alistair Campbell, Peter Mandelson and Jonathan Powell, these people, that is the way he likes to deal with people; Michael Levy was of that category.’⁸⁴³

This approach may have worked for Blair in remoulding the Labour Party and concluding an agreement in Northern Ireland, and it had the enormous benefit of bypassing official channels with all the related ‘checks and balances’ of Permanent Secretaries and career diplomats in the field, but it also held dangers that became all too prevalent on Blair’s post-9/11 2001 trip to Syria⁸⁴⁴ while rallying global support for the forthcoming ‘War on Terror.’ Alternatively, the use of envoys and advisors like Levy could be used to avoid awkward discussions with Robin Cook, particularly

⁸⁴² Stuart Wavell *Lord Cashpoint’s Touch of Money Magic*, *Sunday Times*, March 6, 2006, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article742819.ece>

⁸⁴³ Kampfner, John (05.12.2003: 3)

⁸⁴⁴ Some of the potential short-falls of relying on a small group of advisors with relatively narrow field of expertise occurred in October 2001 when Tony Blair came up against some sobering realities and perspectives on the ills of the Middle East on his visit to President Bashar Al-Assad of Syria. With Blair at his side, Assad deviated from a privately agreed statement before the assembled press and humiliated Blair to state that the primary concern for the peoples of the Middle East was not Afghanistan and Iraq, but Israeli terrorism against the Palestinians and Arab states. The ground-work for the trip had been prepared by Michael Levy and Jonathan Powell, but without foreign office advice.

on issues relation to an 'ethical dimension to foreign policy' which Cook - as a less pragmatic figure - saw generally as a higher policy priority than Blair; as Kampfner says, in these situations and contexts 'if other people could do jobs for Blair, circumventing Cook, he was happy to do that.'⁸⁴⁵ Although for Blair - and particularly after Cook's controversial trip to the Occupied Territories and Israel - it was 'quite often seeing Cook's manner as being more harmful than the actual substance of the policy.'⁸⁴⁶ (See: Chapter 5, *Tony Blair and the Foreign Policy-Making of New Labour 1994-2001*)

It might also be easy to imagine that a Foreign Secretary as able as Cook may find the imposition of a 'special advisor and envoy' transplanted into the Foreign Office with his own desk and direct channels of communication to the Prime Minister, unacceptable. And particularly when this resulted in policies which completely bypassed the formal Foreign Office procedures, practices and expertise, in addition to the debating and scrutinizing format of a Cabinet government. However, as Kampfner says:

'The irony of all of that is that Cook and Levy became good friends;' [although] '. . .Cook was originally very suspicious' of Levy '. . .Cook and Levy pretty soon realized they just about saw eye-to-eye on the Middle East. And Cook became quite happy to leave Levy to do quite a lot of his work, when Levy was seen to be successful.'⁸⁴⁷

D: New Labour and the Jewish Vote

Ever since the Labour Party and the political Zionist movement were established, the Labour Party had been the 'party of choice' for the British Jewish communities. Apart from some brief divergences in the 1930s and early 1940s, Jewish voting instincts had remained with Labour through the 1950s and 1960s; to a degree, this was reflected in the number of Jewish MPs. As Rubinstein notes:

⁸⁴⁵ Kampfner, John (05.12.2003: 5)

⁸⁴⁶ Ibid., (05.12.2003: 5)

⁸⁴⁷ Ibid., (05.12.2003: 5)

‘It was . . . largely within the British Labour Party that Jewish political activity took place and Jewish politicians rose to positions of influence.’^{848 849}

However, as Rubinstein claims, ‘during the past ten years [c.1972-1982] most of the pro-Arab and anti-Israeli feeling in Britain . . . emanates from the Labour Party, especially (though not entirely) from its socialist left-wing.’⁸⁵⁰ As a consequence of these changes within Labour many Jewish voters became alienated. As Mencer states:

‘When the Labour Party was in the wilderness years in the 1980s, the Party made a sharp move to the left-wing, and this meant that a lot of the Jewish community in Britain left its ranks and moved closer towards the Conservatives. Margaret Thatcher’s constituency was Finchley and Golders Green was a constituency with a large Jewish community in it. So obviously she made a large play for that particular vote and that support.’⁸⁵¹

But as Labour MP Paul Rose⁸⁵² notes, aside the decline in Jewish MPs, there were other reasons behind the decision by the left-wing to become critical of Israel in that ‘the longer Israel is regarded as an occupying power, and the further we get from the memories of 1948 and the preceding horrors, the more tenuous are those ties likely to

⁸⁴⁸ Rubinstein, W. D. (1982: 17) Chapter 1, *quoting*, Geoffrey Alderman (1975: 195) *Not Quite British: The Political Attitudes of Anglo-Jewry, British Sociology Year Book*, Volume 2

⁸⁴⁹ Central to Rubinstein’s hypothesis in accounting for the shift in the hitherto generally close relations between the Labour Party and British Jews occurred in part as a result of the ‘most important single feature of modern Jewish history’ - the ‘changing nature and size of the Jewish elite.’ It is argued in the post-1945 period (particularly the 1960s) a Jewish majority of ‘upper-middle classes’ reflected a sea-change in Jewish political allegiances, and a ‘realignment of the allies and enemies of the Jews, with the traditional ‘right’ and ‘left’ changing places in their regard for Jews and their interests.’⁸⁴⁹ Rubinstein, W. D. (1982: 11)

⁸⁵⁰ Rubinstein, W. D. (1982: 152-153) Chapter 5, *The Western Democracies: The United States, Britain and Australia*

⁸⁵¹ Mencer, David (03.06.2004: 2)

⁸⁵² Paul Rose (b.1935) MP: (Manchester Blackley, 1964-1979). A barrister and leading left-wing activist in Manchester, Rose was Parliamentary Private Secretary to Barbara Castle.

become.’⁸⁵³ It was against this background that the reforms of the Labour Party under Neil Kinnock with the decline and exit of the left-wing and far-left had begun to redress the balance; as the reform and modernisation process continued under John Smith and Tony Blair the party came gradually to be seen as distancing itself from anti-Israel policies.

In the period leading up to New Labour’s 1997 election success, and following on the work of Moshe Raviv, Michael Levy had been instrumental in orchestrating the perception of Blair and New Labour as a party that the British Jewish communities could once more trust, not only with British Jewish interests, but with those of Zionism and Israel in particular. New Labour’s need to secure Jewish votes was clarified by Raviv’s observation that ‘an important component of Blair’s ‘New Labour’ policy’ was to ‘win the support of the Jewish community in Britain.’⁸⁵⁴ The capture of this small but important electorate, often located in some key marginal seats, was considered crucial for the election and re-election of New Labour, as well as the progress of the Oslo Peace Process, which the majority of Jews in Britain supported, became the opportunity and the vehicle for Labour to achieve this objective. As Kampfner says, a key component and mechanism for securing a section of the Jewish vote for Labour was undertaken via the LFI at the Labour Party conference:

‘. . . when Blair took over, people at party conference would gauge Blair’s priorities by the amount of time he spent at the Labour Friends of Israel and the LMEC after dinner speeches; Blair would, did, and does spend more time at the LFI party, and always gives a speech as the Guest of Honour, than at any other party. That was the kind of thing that Michael Levy said “you do that and be seen, you don’t just do it quietly, you be seen to be doing it as a statement of your priorities,” and he did that from 1994.’⁸⁵⁵

⁸⁵³ Rubinstein, W. D. (1982: 156-157) Chapter 5, *quoting*, Paul Rose, *Jewish Chronicle*, June 29, 1979

⁸⁵⁴ Raviv, Moshe. (1998: 270)

⁸⁵⁵ Kampfner, John (05.12.2003: 8)

Blair's approach to attracting the Jewish vote in order to assist in securing a Labour government brought some criticism within the party. His pro-Israel stance was made at the expense of the wider neutralist policy position (based on the Oslo Accords) and was often seen more as a pro-Israel bias than an attempt to get Labour elected, particularly as David Mepham says, when he addressed the party conference:

'In so far as Blair had a kind of instinct on the question he was always very pro-Israeli. And I noted that from working for the party from 1994 to 1997 that the only indication that I saw of it, was that every year at the party conference there was a Labour Friends of Israel reception which was always extremely well attended, and Blair always went to and made a very nice speech; and then there was the Arab League Ambassadors reception that Blair would turn up to for about a minute - and leave. It was very clear even then that he was very pro-Israeli.'⁸⁵⁶

E: Best Practice States

Tony Blair's style of approach to domestic politics is also identifiable in his inclinations towards foreign affairs and the Israel-Palestinian conflict. As John Kampfner says, Blair's approach reflected the influence of the 1980s in terms of applying 'what he regarded as idealism and ideology over what was workable, and what is practicable, so it was partly pragmatism, about trying to get the Labour Party back to what he considered were first principles, and Israel's right to exist being the bottom line, and from there, everything else stems.'⁸⁵⁷ Kampfner continues:

'There is a convergence within that sense of promoting "beacon countries." Blair would use it in a domestic context in a very Blairite phrase "best practice" or "good practice" just as it is - identify good schools, help them spread good practice across the city; the same thing is to identify a country in a region, and help it to develop best practice within that region.'⁸⁵⁸

⁸⁵⁶ Mepham, David (14.12.2005: 4)

⁸⁵⁷ Kampfner, John (05.12.2003: 8)

⁸⁵⁸ Ibid., (05.12.2003: 7)

The interest and promotion of 'best practice' and 'beacon states' within liberal interventionist thinking is thought to be a key factor in Blair's long-standing support for the state of Israel. As Kampfner further elaborates:

'Blair makes much shore of the fact that Israel within its own state is a functioning democracy, operating through the ballot box, while imperfect, it is, within those terms, an example to other countries in the region and beyond, how even in a fragile region you can operate within those rules. So it is partly, not quite Israel as a beacon, even he would see that as loaded, but Israel as an example of how it can work.'⁸⁵⁹

For Blair, while he acknowledges Israel's imperfections, as a democracy it remains, particularly in the context of the rest of the Middle Eastern region, a paragon of western values. Despite his forthright view of Israel, Blair was able to distinguish between the authoritarianism of some Arab states and the democratic credentials of others. For example, 'while he would be defensive on Israel's behalf in terms of states like Syria, he would have a different approach to Jordan and Egypt because they were seen as being more westernized in terms of their adherence to western norms.'⁸⁶⁰

The New Labour Government and the Israel-Palestinian Conflict 1997-2001

By the time that Tony Blair's New Labour took over the reins of government, the peace process which had been built upon the Oslo Accords of 1993 was already in serious trouble. In 1996, following the 1995 assassination of Yitzak Rabin, the right-wing Likud leader, Benjamin Netanyahu,⁸⁶¹ had been elected Prime Minister of Israel. Netanyahu was intent on stalling, and even reversing the supposed concessions to the Palestinians. For Blair and large numbers of British Jews, the commitment to an 'Oslo-plus' position found Britain increasingly isolated from the possibility of influencing either Netanyahu, or Israel. Particularly as both Israel and Arafat's

⁸⁵⁹ Ibid., (05.12.2003: 5)

⁸⁶⁰ Ibid., (05.12.2003: 6)

⁸⁶¹ Benjamin Netanyahu (b.1949) Israeli PM [Likud]: 1996-1999; Foreign Minister, 2002-2005; Ambassador UN, 1984-1988.

Palestinian Authority were proving unable or unwilling to implement those stages of Oslo already agreed, with a resulting spiralling into violence on both sides.

This was the serious background situation which confronted Blair's new Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook on Labour's election to government in May 1997. Unlike many of his predecessors at the Head of the Foreign Office, Robin Cook came to the post of Foreign Secretary with significant experience of foreign affairs. Having already served as Shadow Foreign Affairs Spokesperson (July 1994 - May 1997) he considered his duty - in what was still seen in some quarters to be a ministerial backwater - to have been duly served. Denied what he considered his rightful and natural key domestic mantle, Cook came to the Foreign Office cloisters determined to stake out a piece of political territory of his own. More specifically, Cook already had a well developed sense of the subject and issues emanating from, and surrounding Israel and the Palestinians. In an interview with the author, Cook stated that the origins of his interest lie in the influence resulting from the activities of the Labour related figure of Yousef Allen in Scotland:

‘Well I was always deeply aware of it [Israel-Palestinian subject], and indeed in Scottish circles there had been a long link with the PLO and the Palestinian struggle.

There was quite a lot of Palestinian contact with the Scottish Labour Party, particularly organised actually and in many ways originating with Ernest Ross and George Galloway - who are both from Dundee - George Galloway did not become an MP there like Ernest but he originated from there and became a key organiser. Ernest Ross who is a good friend and has very strong links with the Palestinian people (and probably still does); he was very active in the House on the issue when I became an MP [1974].’⁸⁶²

This early introduction led to an interest which continued to develop as his career progressed with his appointments to more senior shadow and government ministerial posts. Once on the opposition front benches, he was appointed by Blair as

⁸⁶² Cook, Robin (02.11.2004: 1) *Interview: Cook-Nelson*, Portcullis House, London

Spokesperson on Foreign Affairs in 1994 after John Smith's death. Cook states his view on the Israel-Palestinian subject in 1994 and its influence upon New Labour:

'Without doubt the Middle East situation was one of the high priorities of foreign policy at that time. I first went to the Middle East while I was still in opposition [1974-1997] and I spent a night with our Ambassador in Tel-Aviv and a couple of nights with our Consular-General who was in East Jerusalem (because we have a separate diplomatic representation to the Palestinians).'⁸⁶³

And I travelled then quite extensively through the West Bank and Gaza. One of the advantages of being in opposition is that you do actually and frankly get more time than when you are Foreign Secretary.'⁸⁶⁴

On December 9th, 1997, sixth months after becoming Prime Minister, and with Tony Blair, New Labour, Robin Cook and the special advisor and kitchen cabinet style installed at Number 10, the Labour government made what was widely interpreted as the first foreign policy statement on the subject of the Middle East peace process and the Israel-Palestinian conflict. In addition to stating the government's policy position on one of the most important regions and subjects in foreign affairs, the speech was also considered to be a presentation of Blair's personal views and position amid a rapidly faltering Oslo Peace Process.

The address was made within the complex and emotive context of a party already embroiled in issues arising from New Labour's 'ethical dimension' to foreign policy (already bruised by the sale of Hawk Trainer aircraft to Indonesia) and a Prime Minister and a Foreign Office consequently already attempting to distance themselves from the intense media scrutiny surrounding the declaration that New Labour's foreign policy was to have an 'ethical dimension.' Notably, the speech was made to a meeting of Labour Friends of Israel (LFI) as Blair stated:

⁸⁶³ The other reason for the separate diplomatic residencies is that in accordance with UN resolutions and international law, Britain does not recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, as such the official residence of the Ambassador remains in Tel-Aviv, as does all other Embassies.

⁸⁶⁴ Cook, Robin (02.11.2004: 1)

‘How wonderful it is to be among friends. Not just friends of Labour but friends of Israel too. I am proud to say - I have counted myself as a friend of Israel all my adult life. As a young man, Israel presented a social democratic ideal - even before I knew what the words social democracy properly meant. Here was a triumph of a new country transformed from a homeland to statehood in the aftermath of the greatest crime against humanity known to history - the Holocaust.’⁸⁶⁵

Blair continues to state the *basis* and *nature* of relations (past and present) between the British Labour Party, the Jewish community in Britain, the Labor Party in Israel, and in light of Likud’s election to government, Israel itself. In addition to identifying the central basis of the relationships, which are primarily viewed as being founded on the ‘shared’ and ‘traditional values’, Blair also refers too to the previous difficulties of the 1980s - ‘now resolved’ under New Labour:

‘There was a time when some in the Labour Party worried that to confess to being a Friend of Israel counted you against the politically correct. One measure of how far New Labour has come is that this is now long behind us. Alongside Labour’s reassertion of traditional values, there has been a remarkable renewal and strengthening of the deep roots between the Jewish community and the Labour Party. It is one of Labour’s proudest achievements.’⁸⁶⁶

Despite Blair’s very obvious identification with Israel, and especially with the British Jewish communities, there was clear evidence that Blair did not hold the Palestinians and PLO entirely responsible for the precarious position of the Peace Process. There were a number of critical notes - which Blair did not flinch from stating - regarding Israel’s need to stick to agreements reached thus far and respect requests by the United States for a ‘freeze on settlement activity’, and ‘substantial further redeployments’ of the Israeli military in order to maintain momentum in the peace process.

⁸⁶⁵ Blair, Tony (09.12.1997: 1-2) *Speech: Blair-Labour Friends of Israel* (LFI), London

⁸⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, (09.12.1997: 3)

Although Blair is careful in the best traditions of a pragmatist to convey to the representatives of Netanyahu's Likud government - metaphorically present in the galleries - the failures and the requirements of the Oslo Accords - all be it from the relative safety of the 'both sides' analogy:

'I saw Prime Minister Netanyahu in London recently. I said two things to him: That the security of Israel must be protected; and that it is crucial to regain the trust and the momentum that has been lost. The Interim Agreement and the Hebron Agreement have to be implemented. The promises both sides have made have to be fulfilled as the very minimum of good faith.'⁸⁶⁷

Blair continues:

'From Israel, that means responding to the American calls for a freeze on settlement activity and substantial further redeployments of Israeli forces from the West Bank. The exchange of land for peace is at the heart of the Oslo Accords. I therefore welcome the Israeli Government's acceptance of the need to move forward on its commitment to transfer more of the West Bank to Palestinian control.'⁸⁶⁸

Reactions to the policy statement were mixed: Moshe Raviv (former Israeli Ambassador to Britain) described it as 'the most authoritative policy statement of his government on the peace process to date.'⁸⁶⁹ Conversely, it was viewed by the retired Labour MP, David Watkins, as a dubious speech derived from 'misconceptions based in disinformation.'⁸⁷⁰ Although Robin Cook states he was 'rather taken back by the extent to which he was giving a very emotional personal endorsement of Israel,'⁸⁷¹ he is rather more inclined to categorise it in the broader context of Blair challenging

⁸⁶⁷ Ibid., (09.12.1997: 6-7)

⁸⁶⁸ Ibid., (09.12.1997: 6-8)

⁸⁶⁹ Raviv, Moshe (1998: 270)

⁸⁷⁰ Watkins, David (15.12.1997: 1) *Letter: Watkins-Blair*, CAABU, London

⁸⁷¹ Cook, Robin (02.11.2004: 4)

traditional positions, - his ultra-pragmatism - as much as anything of substance. As Cook remarks retrospectively in 2004:

‘I think Tony was obviously stating a position, and of course Tony has positioned himself throughout his career as being somebody who was courageous in disagreeing with the Labour Party. I do not think anyone would suggest that it was politically incorrect to be supporting Israel. Labour Friends of Israel has always been strong-willed and has even to this day a very large number of Labour MPs who are attached to it.’⁸⁷²

As another example of the lurking dangers that arise from reliance upon small group of advisors, according to David Watkins, the ‘original draft’ of Blair’s statement of Labour’s policy position on the Israel-Palestinian issue caused ‘consternation in the FCO [Foreign and Commonwealth Office].’⁸⁷³ Although Watkins’ says he never actually saw the original draft, the Foreign Office had apparently been sufficiently alarmed by the overt pro-Israeli bias of the speech that they had ‘insisted on getting a few balancing paragraphs inserted. Even so, the speech was seriously unbalanced.’⁸⁷⁴ Furthermore Watkins’ makes a point of emphasis that it is also, ‘Interesting to recall that this was when Robin Cook was Secretary of State [for Foreign Affairs]!’⁸⁷⁵ The reference by Watkins’ to Cook’s perhaps further evidence - also reflecting the assessments by Kampfner, Mephram and Mencer - that Blair and Cook - and despite their quite different introductions and perspectives on the subject - operated on a ‘duel’ or ‘parallel’ track approach to Foreign Policy. Watkins made a direct response to the LFI speech via a letter to Blair in which he unequivocally identified the speech as fundamentally flawed and biased in its assessment of the conflict thus far, and most particularly, where responsibility for the continuity of the conflict should lie. In an interview Watkins reiterated in more detail the assertion that the source of the ‘misinformation’ afflicting Blair’s interpretation of the issues and situation resulted from the fact that the speech had actually been written by Labour Friends of Israel

⁸⁷² Ibid., (02.11.2004: 4)

⁸⁷³ Watkins, David (06.07.2003: 2)

⁸⁷⁴ Ibid., (06.07.2003: 2)

⁸⁷⁵ Ibid., (06.07.2003: 2)

(LFI), something that in David Watkins' opinion and substantial parliamentary experience was 'unique, and certainly unprecedented.'⁸⁷⁶

In contrast to the criticisms directed at Blair from the Foreign Office and Watkins, Moshe Raviv argued that Blair's LFI speech only reiterated the British view that peace could only be achieved on the basis 'of a just exchange of land for peace', and as such, the 'Blair statement did not represent a change of British policy since the Six Day War, but it reflected friendship for Israel and understanding of its vulnerability.'⁸⁷⁷ For others, Blair's speech was a clear reflection of the applied pragmatism which New Labour had adopted and directed towards foreign affairs from the moment they assumed office, and exemplified by the Northern Ireland peace process in terms of 'dealing with the world as it is, rather than how you would wish it to be.'⁸⁷⁸

For Blair, in addition to his belief that progress in the Peace Process could be made via training and education, the Rita Hinden school of thought which had also been applied in Northern Ireland as part of the Mitchell Plan was also a key factor in creating the correct conditions in the Israel Palestinian issue:

'I want to see the Palestinians free to trade with the EU' [and] 'I want to see the EU and Israel working together to remove obstacles to the development of the Palestinian economy.'⁸⁷⁹

Blair's pragmatic approach was reflected later in a debate the following year in the House of Commons, during which the Labour MP, George Galloway, demanded that Israel - 'as a violator of UN resolutions, should be subject to a similar sanctions regime as Iraq.'⁸⁸⁰ Britain's position at the time, seeking progress in the peace process in collaboration with the EEC, was - Galloway deemed - entirely inadequate. Robin

⁸⁷⁶ Ibid., (06.07.2003: 9)

⁸⁷⁷ Raviv, Moshe (1998: 271)

⁸⁷⁸ Mencer, David (03.06.2004: 2)

⁸⁷⁹ Blair, Tony (09.12.1997: 11)

⁸⁸⁰ Galloway, George (02.02.1998) *Iraq*, Hansard, col. 728

Cook rejected Galloway's assertion that 'Britain had turned its back on the Palestinian people,'⁸⁸¹ arguing that the Palestinians had never sought such sanctions themselves. Cook argued further, and remaining in line with Blair's own support for like-minded 'best-practice' states, the difference between states for who sanctions policies might be appropriate, and those like Israel where it was not:

'I have many criticisms of the Israeli Government, but we should remember that they were elected with the support of half the population of Israel. It would be extremely helpful if Saddam Hussein were even to contemplate allowing his people the same expression of their democratic will. Until he does so, he is in a very different category from Israel.'⁸⁸²

For Cook and the government, supporting the Palestinian economy was a far more useful and constructive approach, offering as it did a degree of prosperity, a practical route forwards.

For Labour critics of Israel, the leadership's refusal to apply sanctions against Israel, despite its abysmal treatment of the Palestinians, its reneging of important elements of the Oslo peace process and, indeed, its possession of nuclear weapons in contravention of treaty obligations, was evidence of double standards, which flew in the face of both the notion of an ethical dimension to foreign policy and a commitment to liberal humanitarian interventionism. Ernest Ross summarised the resulting frustration:

'People ask me why so many Palestinians seem to support the Iraqi regime in times of crisis. The answer is that rallies in support of Iraq are an expression of the extreme frustration at policies backed by the United States and designed to protect Israel from the exacting standards of international law - laws that we are demanding Saddam Hussein should abide by - and therefore to frustrate the legitimate goals of Palestinian self-determination and the return of occupied Arab lands.'⁸⁸³

⁸⁸¹ Cook, Robin (02.02.1998) *Iraq*, Hansard, col. 728

⁸⁸² Ibid., (02.02.1998) *Iraq*, Hansard, col. 728

⁸⁸³ Ross, Ernest (17.02.1998) *Iraq*, Hansard, col. 967-968

The Strategic Defence Review and Report (July 1998)

Six months after the LFI speech and nearly a year into the first New Labour government, Tony Blair made his second major foray into the realm of international affairs. The fact that Blair was prepared to make a sweeping commitment to foreign affairs at this time reflected both his increasing isolation from domestic affairs as Gordon Brown asserted his fiscal prudential influence upon taxation and spending, and the fact that he had recognised that world affairs were increasingly impinging on the domestic arena.

During the 1994-1997 period in opposition, Tony Blair, Robin Cook and New Labour had gained a great deal of political credibility and electoral capital from comparison with the ultra-realism of the Conservative's foreign policy, in what was called - the 'doctrine of benign inactivity.'⁸⁸⁴ It was also while in opposition that New Labour recognized the shifting dynamics of international affairs in the post-Cold War and Gulf War eras. As a consequence, almost immediately upon taking office, Blair commissioned the Strategic Defence Review (May 1997) (published as a policy document in July 1998), which not only reflected the comprehensive reforms and modernisation of the Labour Party and proposals for the EEC and UN, but also clearly identified and proposed ideas to address the shifting dynamics in international affairs. As George Robertson (Defence Minister) stated:

'The Review is radical, reflecting a changing world, in which the confrontation of the Cold War has been replaced by a complex mixture of uncertainty and instability. These problems pose a real threat to our security, whether in the Balkans, the Middle East or in some troublespot yet to

⁸⁸⁴ Seldon, Anthony [Editor] (2007: 597) *Blair's Britain 1997-2007*, Chapter 27, Michael Clarke, (2006: 10) *Foreign Policy, A decade of Labour's foreign policy*, quoting, Tony Blair, *A Global Alliance for Global Values*, Foreign Policy Centre, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

ignite.....In the post-Cold War world, we must be prepared to go to the crisis, rather than have the crisis come to us.'⁸⁸⁵

The Middle East figured highly on the agenda of the review:

'Outside Europe our interests are most likely to be affected by events in the Gulf and the Mediterranean. Instability in those areas also carries wider risks. We have particularly important national interests and close friendships in the Gulf. Oil supplies from the Gulf are crucial to the world economy. Confrontation in the Middle East carries the risk of escalation and since the region borders NATO [Turkey - NATO member (1952) and a European/Middle Eastern State] gives us a continuing stake in its stability.'⁸⁸⁶

In conclusion, Robertson stated:

'We do not want to stand idly by and watch humanitarian disasters of the aggression of dictators go unchecked. We want to give a lead, we want to be a force for good. . . . a sound defence is a sound foreign policy.'⁸⁸⁷

The *Strategic Defence Review Report* (July 1998) became the foundation text and evidence - in conjunction with external events - that provided a key theoretical basis for the Doctrine of Humanitarian Intervention. This was made explicitly nine-months after the Strategic Defence Review and Report, when Tony Blair made another major foreign policy speech to the Economic Club of Chicago on April 22, 1999. While it had been the continuation of the Balkans conflicts that specifically generated the initiative and provided the backdrop to the Chicago address, the interventionalist basis of the doctrine clearly had the potential for global relevance.

⁸⁸⁵ George Robertson *The Strategic Defence Review, Introduction*, Section (6), Command Paper 3999, July 1998, (Stationery Office), p.2

⁸⁸⁶ Ibid., July 1998, *Introduction*, Section (6), p.40

⁸⁸⁷ Ibid., July 1998, *Introduction*, Section (6), p.19-20

The doctrine of the international community and the intervention into what are traditionally argued to be the internal affairs of sovereign nation states was neither new nor universally accepted. As academics Driver and Martell convey:

‘There was nothing new in the argument itself - just war and the grounds for intervening in others’ affairs is an age-old problem that has been much picked over. But it was applied to a context of allegedly greater globalization than before, and it did mark some differences from previous Labour . . . approaches.

Blair advocated reforms to international financial institutions, the UN Security Council, Third-World debt and environmental agreements and argued for a shift away from a bias towards non-interference. International interventions beyond a state’s own borders is justified, argued Blair, in cases of genocide, refugee crises and regimes based on minority rule. In practice genocide and refugee crises have come to be the key justifications for intervention. (To have taken on minority rule as a basis for international intervention may have led to Britain’s later having to invade even some of its closest and most powerful allies, or even itself!) The international ‘community’, for Blair, should act when there is a humanitarian catastrophe that the government concerned will not or cannot address.’⁸⁸⁸

This might have seemed to bode well for Labour supporters of the Palestinians. The situation involving Israel and the Palestinians contained many of these referenced criteria for intervention: the Palestinian refugee crises extended back to 1948; the Israeli occupation forces were a minority over a majority; the conditions - particularly in Gaza - were a humanitarian crises in themselves; and successive Israeli governments (particularly those of Netanyahu and Ariel Sharon) did not seem able or willing to address the situation; and many Israeli activities were long-standing and in violation of UN resolutions and international law. But while Blair appeared

⁸⁸⁸ Driver, Stephen & Martell, Luke (2002: 37) *Blair’s Britain*, Chapter 5, *New Labour, Third Ways and Globalization, Ethics and Internationalism: A New Approach to Foreign Policy*, (Cambridge: Polity Press)

determined to follow through on the theory with its practical application to issues and regimes in some parts of the world, he was clearly less inclined to do so when it came to Israel. As Driver and Martell again state:

‘Blair became increasingly involved in foreign policy as time progressed, for instance on Iraq and Serbia. He was seen as more hawkish than Cook or even Bill Clinton. His approach showed more certitude, stressing leadership and bilateral relations with the USA.’⁸⁸⁹

Blair’s apparent reluctance to concede to some Labour arguments did not necessarily indicate that Blair had no interest in pursuing resolution of the Israel-Palestinian conflict. From an ultra-pragmatist’s perspective, he was acutely aware that he was able to wield greater influence over Israeli policy towards the Israel-Palestinian conflict when the Labor Party of Israel was in government as opposed to Likud. For example, when Ehud Barak⁸⁹⁰ was elected the nature of the relationship was illustrated in that Britain was the first country Barak visited, after the United States in July 1999. Blair quickly repaid the compliment with an almost immediate return visit. However, Blair’s approach to foreign affairs in dealing with whoever was in power was tested when Barak subsequently lost the election to Ariel Sharon, who formed a Likud bloc government in February 2001. Although Blair did not achieve much success with Sharon, the policy position remained the same: to accept what existed and not be distracted by wishing the circumstances and individuals were different. This approach was applied equally to the Palestinian leadership, in particular Yasser Arafat, who was politically ignored and at times castigated by both Sharon and U.S. President Bush junior.

Blair’s relations with President’s Clinton and Bush: A key external determinant

The British relationship with the United States, and more specifically Blair’s own relationship with U.S. President Bill Clinton, was to play a crucial role in defining the limits of Blair’s ability to influence Israel and its conflict with the Palestinians. Blair’s relations with Bill Clinton were close, but not without occasional disagreements and

⁸⁸⁹ Ibid., (2002: 37)

⁸⁹⁰ Ehud Barak (b.1942) Labor PM: 1999-2001; Labor leader, 1996-2001.

spats on key areas of policy in major theatres of international affairs. Kampfner says of Blair's relations with Clinton on foreign issues generally, and the subject of the Israel-Palestinian conflict in particular:

'It was predominantly a very good relationship but they had big rows over Kosovo, quite serious ones, and I document [*'Blair's Wars'* 2003] how Clinton got increasingly exasperated with Blair's posturing, and Blair's moralizing, and there are a lot of Clinton people quotes in there about that.

But that having been said, [the Middle East generally, and the Israel-Palestinian peace process in particular] . . . this was Clinton's baby, this was Clinton's thing, he needed something to show for himself, and he was convinced that he could deliver, and he jealously guarded that ability and wouldn't let anybody else getting near the plaudits or getting involved. He made it clear to Blair in no uncertain terms; he couldn't see what Blair could deliver to the equation, which he couldn't do himself, - and he was probably right.'⁸⁹¹

Despite the continuation of the 'special relationship' Bill Clinton ensured that during his term in office Blair had little or no influence on the issue of the Middle East, and Israel-Palestine in particular.

Up until Clinton's departure in January 2001, Blair became increasingly frustrated at being effectively excluded from the Middle East Peace Process, particularly after the departure of Benjamin Netanyahu (Likud) and the arrival of Ehud Barak (Labor) in July 1999. With the election of a Labor Prime Minister in Israel, Blair felt able to take a more influential role. There were a number of reasons for Clinton's exclusion of Blair: Clinton - as with Likud and to a lesser extent, Labor in Israel - viewed the European position on the Israel-Palestinian issue as too pro-Palestinian/Arab. He, with a debt of gratitude to the pro-Israel Jewish lobby for supporting the Democrats in the election against George Bush senior, did not want to risk offending pro-Israel Jewish sensitivities; additionally, sensing the approach of the end to his period in office, he

⁸⁹¹ Kampfner, John (05.12.2003: 7)

sought to capture an opportunity to secure another major coup in international affairs by cementing a Final Status agreement between Yasser Arafat and Ehud Barak; as such, as Kampfner says: 'Clinton ensured Blair was consulted, but nothing more.'⁸⁹²

The Chicago speech and the resulting doctrine can thus be understood as a barely veiled attempt by the British Prime Minister to persuade a reluctant President Clinton to support a collective participatory approach to foreign policy issues. At the time, directed at securing U.S. participation or at least support for military intervention in Kosovo via NATO to prevent the Serbian forces of Slobodan Milosevic from conducting his military campaign in the semi-autonomous province. However, by asserting the linkages between the Kosovo situation and the broader processes of globalization, and by claiming the collective responsibility of the international community to intervene through collaborative efforts was a factor arising from globalisation, Blair was both demanding that Britain and other nations be included in the processes of international decision-making, and justifying a British pro-active interventionist policy.

The common perception is that Blair was disadvantaged by Clinton and the Democrats' departure from office and by the arrival of the hard-line Republican George W. Bush, in that Blair had lost a partner prepared to engage in the Israel-Palestinian issue. However, in terms of the Israel-Palestinian issue this was not necessarily the reality. While disagreements over the Israel-Palestinian issue were not sufficient to alienate Blair and Clinton, Clinton's decision to monopolise efforts to resolve the conflict to gain domestic and international prestige, at the exclusion of Blair, meant the departure of Clinton and the election of George Bush in November 2000 appeared to present an opportunity for an arch pragmatist like Blair to influence the American perspective on affairs in the Middle East.

The early signs for Blair were positive: although Bush owed a debt to the Christian right-wing 'bible belt' of the Conservative heartlands of America, he was not - as Clinton had been - quite as beholden to the pro-Israel American Jewish vote. And although the Bush administration came to be increasingly influenced by the Christian

⁸⁹² Ibid., (2003: 178-9)

fundamentalists and their alliance with the extreme Likud Jewish lobby (a union provided by Benjamin Netanyahu via ‘impeccable links to the American right’⁸⁹³ and cemented as Israeli Prime Minister 1996-1999), Bush appeared, initially at least, more willing to give Blair a more active role.

However, Blair was to remain thwarted: two months after Bush took the inaugural oath (Jan 20th 2001), Ariel Sharon, the far-right revisionist Zionist, defeated Labor’s Ehud Barak in the Israeli general elections of March 2001. The election of the hard-liner Sharon may have dramatically reduced the possibility of Blair’s influence, but for Blair, it simply meant delving deeper into the philosophy which had sustained him through his political career: ‘you work with what exists, rather than what you prefer to exist!’ Likud and Sharon were the new realities and Blair intended to work with those new realities. Even though politically as a Republican Bush and Blair were theoretically polarised, Blair’s ultra-pragmatism ensured he saw the change in the White House as an opportunity for Britain, Labour and himself. Whatever Blair’s philosophical approach, the reality proved increasingly difficult. As Kinnock notes:

‘There is a deep frustration on all sides of the arguments, with the failure to stimulate a meaningful Peace Process. So far, tragically, it has proved to be the case because you will never get George Bush, - in or out of an election year, - to be really audacious about inducing the Israeli government to move in the right direction, you will see no equivalent of ‘Nixon in China.’⁸⁹⁴

Kinnock concludes:

‘What people cannot see is any imaginative initiative coming from the United Kingdom government to try and make its subscription to the Peace Process. Everybody knows that if an opportunity arises that the British/Labour government is not going to turn its back on the opportunity, but of course a country of our size and power can only fight or work on so many fronts, so

⁸⁹³ Ibid., (2003: 76)

⁸⁹⁴ Kinnock, Neil (30.01.2004: 5)

maybe it is fairly natural that it is not among the priorities, but that to is a sense of frustration.’⁸⁹⁵

Bush junior was clearly not inclined to make the same mistakes as Clinton, or his father - George Bush senior - in becoming unnecessarily embroiled in the affairs of the Israel-Palestinian conflict. He had seen Clinton grow increasingly desperate to salvage something from the huge investment made in the Israelis and Palestinians to define his presidency, only to ultimately fail to secure an agreement between Ehud Barak and Yasser Arafat. Bush made it clear from the beginning that he had no intention of becoming similarly involved. Blair had hoped that in the vacuum caused by America’s withdrawal from active engagement in negotiations, he - with his personal international stature then at a highpoint - might be able to step in to fill the diplomatic vacuum. But as Kampfner points out, he soon realized the impossibility of this scenario:

‘It was never going to happen, because the Israelis were never going to let it happen. And Blair pretty soon realized that he would have to return to a very traditional British approach to the Middle East of prompting and prodding the Americans.’⁸⁹⁶

Blair was not entirely impotent in exerting influence on the American presidency. What are seen as generally positive and substantive achievements by Blair upon the American President included the prevention of Israel assassinating President Yasser Arafat, the publication of the Road Map, and George Bush (junior) being the first U.S. President to acknowledge and support the concept of establishing a Palestinian state as a matter of U.S. foreign policy.

A defining feature of the differences in the approach of Blair in contrast to Bush was that despite some deep seated misgivings about the role of Yasser Arafat in the conflict, especially the issue of suicide bombers, Blair’s position remained fairly statically set on recognition of Arafat as the democratically elected leader of the

⁸⁹⁵ Ibid., (30.01.2004: 6)

⁸⁹⁶ Kampfner, John (05.12.2003: 7)

Palestinians, and he continued to negotiate with him; Bush, from a very early stage, and assisted by the Israeli Likud government, publicly rejected Arafat on both counts, directly calling for his replacement as a pre-condition for renewed negotiations.

Nonetheless, criticisms that Blair was too subservient to the American position on the Middle East and generally failed to assert any effective influence upon US policy are also disputed. As Baroness Symons argues:

‘But I think it is very obvious and widely acknowledged that the Prime Minister had a great deal of influence in getting George Bush signed up for the Road Map, and that he does have a recurring theme in his discussions with the President of the United States about the Israel-Palestine issue.

It isn’t the only issue in Middle East politics, but it is the long-running real sore and bone of contention, and source of unrest - as we all know, and has been for a very, very long time. So I think we have all contributed to trying to keep this problem constantly on the front burner and not the back burner.’⁸⁹⁷

As David Mepham pointed out, Blair’s apparent proximity to America was not a reason for replicating American policies, but rather the means by which he sought to advance his own:

‘Blair sees Middle East policy as being a policy that is pursued by gaining influence upon the United States rather than something that is pursued directly to the region. That is also how he views international policy more generally. That America is the dominant power, whether it is Clinton or Bush, the way to get things done is to stick very, very close to them.’⁸⁹⁸

Or as Blair’s political advisor - Jonathan Powell - more succinctly stated in terms of tactical advice when attempting to influence American policy on the Middle East and

⁸⁹⁷ Symons, Baroness (19.01.2004: 7-8) *Interview: Symons-Nelson*, House of Lords, London

⁸⁹⁸ Mepham, David (14.12.2005: 6)

the Israel-Palestinian conflict: 'you get up the arse of the American's - and you stay there.'⁸⁹⁹

The Return of a Labor Government in Israel: Ehud Barak 1999-2001

Tony Blair and New Labour welcomed the return of the Israeli Labor Party to government and the departure of Likud's Benjamin Netanyahu in May 1999. Not only was it generally agreed that Netanyahu had assisted the unravelling process of the Oslo Accords, but that he had little if any intention of ever concluding a peace agreement with the Palestinians. Robin Cook describes how, in the years preceding Labour's election victory in May 1997, the peace process had still been underway, and despite obvious difficulties, seemed to have a good chance of success. Netanyahu's election to power had seriously hindered the progress. However, as Cook says:

'Then, when I became Foreign Secretary, which coincided with a period when Benjamin Netanyahu became Prime Minister of Israel, which was a very serious difficulty because not only was he himself resolute in not wanting to make any concessions to the Palestinians, but he also lost the trust of all Arab leaders of the region who all felt that at various times or other he had made them promises which he had not kept. And to some extent actually the Arab leaders found themselves more disposed to the era of Sharon [March 2001-April 2006] not to Ariel Sharon himself - but in terms that they were more able to understand where they were with Sharon because at least he was already a blunt Israeli sort who would never be any different, whereas they thought Netanyahu was. For instance, when Netanyahu went to the Wye Plantation meeting he made an agreement but never implemented it.'⁹⁰⁰

The contrast between Cook's narrative in conveying the period during Netanyahu's reign, and that after the arrival of Ehud Barak two years later (May 1999) is all too evident:

⁸⁹⁹ Ibid., (14.12.2005: 6)

⁹⁰⁰ Cook, Robin (02.11.2004: 2)

‘I was with Tony Blair when he first met Barak in London on his way to the United States. I found Barak an enormous breath of fresh air actually. I remember a quote in the press at the time saying meeting him was like walking out into the night air or into an early dawn. He wanted to get a settlement; he wanted to get an agreement. I found that brief period of the Barak Government really quite exciting in that there were options and possibilities.’⁹⁰¹

In a last-ditch attempt to assure himself of a legacy built on peace in the Middle East, Clinton used the opportunity of Barak’s election and clear enthusiasm to reach a peace settlement, to call the Israeli and Palestinian leaders to the negotiating table once more. It is notable that Robin Cook viewed the ‘failure’ at Camp David (July 2000)⁹⁰² to achieve an agreement between Israel and the PLO as being attributable to Arafat, - and Arafat alone: ‘Arafat didn’t exactly reject it, but he failed to grab it.’⁹⁰³ While Arafat was lacking in ‘people skills’ and intent above all on maintaining an Arab consensus for his position, it is Barak that Cook sees as ‘bold’ and ‘visionary,’ similarly, Cook says that what Barak offered the Palestinians was ‘the best’ deal they have ever been presented by Israel. Regardless of the merits or otherwise of the ‘deal on offer,’ no progress was made and the talks limped on into 2001. In reality neither Barak nor Arafat were able or prepared to reach an agreement. With the Clinton administration dominating the peace process negotiations, Cook - as with Blair - sought alternative means for asserting British influence and interests in the Middle East.

⁹⁰¹ Ibid., (02.11.2004: 2)

⁹⁰² The Middle East Peace Summit at Camp David (July 11-25, 2000) between U.S. President Bill Clinton, Yasser Arafat (Palestinian Authority) and Ehud Barak (Prime Minister of Israel) was modelled on the 1978 meeting between Anwar Sadat (President of Egypt) and Menachem Begin (Prime Minister of Israel) which concluded with the first Israel-Arab peace treaty (1979). The 2000 summit was a Final Status Settlement of the most contentious issues (Jerusalem, borders, refugees and settlements) were deferred as a mechanism to secure the 1993 Oslo-Washington Accords agreement, but talks concluded without agreement.

⁹⁰³ Cook, Robin (02.11.2004: 3)

As a concession to Cook being appointed away from key domestic areas, and Cook's favoured non-domestic post of minister for Europe, Blair had allowed Cook to retain the services of Derek Fatchett,^{904 905} a long-term left-wing colleague; the other key appointment which gave a greater pragmatism to New Labour's foreign affairs came with the appointment of Baroness Symons⁹⁰⁶ as Minister of State in the Foreign Office (1997-1999). Although Symons was appointed by Blair as a tried and tested moderniser, it was also regarded as a clear signal that New Labour's reform programme would extend to one of the most traditional bastions of British government - the Foreign Office. What Fatchett and Symons shared was a common

⁹⁰⁴ Kampfner says: Cook was allowed to retain the services of Fatchett as 'compensation for losing out on his choice for the European ministry.' Kampfner, John (1998: 129)

⁹⁰⁵ Derek Fatchett (b.1945-d.1999) MP: (Leeds Central, 1983-1999); Junior Minister, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 1997.

⁹⁰⁶ In a 2004 interview Baroness Symons recounted the origins and basis of her interest in the Middle East and the Israel-Palestinian issue: 'Israel-Palestine has been an issue for all of my adult life. Has it been the most important issue? No, I guess East-West politics was one of the huge things - obviously for the generation I grew up in, - and although it was a domestic issue the situation in Northern Ireland in relation to terrorism of course that was the big focus, - on terrorism. When I was the General Secretary of the FTA [Association of First Division Civil Servants, 1989-1996] I did go to Israel with a number of trade union colleagues via the *Histradut* which was quite interesting because obviously within the *Histradut* there was quite a lot of left-wing people many of whom had a great deal of sympathy with the Palestinian cause. That was very good experience because one wasn't just going down the line of a right-wing Israeli view of life, one was going and did indeed meet and spend time with quite a few Palestinians as well. So that brought a lot back into my sort of consciousness and focus of what was happening in the sense that like a lot of people interested in politics - although not a politician at the time, - one reads news papers and current affairs programmes and you do form a view.

Israel is a tiny country. One has to keep reminding ourselves of that. Israel features so much in this huge international issue. This tiny country with a small population: it has got military might out of all proportion to itself; and it's a democracy. And it is an extraordinary phenomenon that is surrounded by a whole range of Arab countries that don't want it, but who are bit by bit gradually coming to terms with the fact that it is probably going to stay there; and no one wanting to be the first to say so, - except that now they have. And I do think it took some guts for Arab states to say that.' Symons, Baroness (19.01.2004: 5-6)

interest in the subject of the Middle Eastern affairs. Cook's choice as his third special advisor - David Matheison - was also highly significant when it became apparent that he had been working on Cook's great initiative for New Labour's approach to foreign affairs, - the Mission Statement. All these factors would be utilized and combined to assert Cook's own identity upon a department after being side-lined from much of the domestic agenda.

A central part of Cook's Middle Eastern strategy was to improve British and Labour-Arab relations - which he considered had faltered under the Conservatives and during Labour's years in opposition - along with a more proactive role for the EEC (which historically had been reluctant to be involved as a result of West German reluctance to offend Israel), which would be enhanced by Britain's Presidency of the EEC (1998-1999). Robin Cook had announced the new approach and his intentions to visit the Middle East on a three-day tour to those assembled at the 50th Anniversary of the Anglo-Arab Association (05.03.1998).⁹⁰⁷

Given the rapidly deteriorating situation between Israel and the PLO it was arguably perhaps always going to be something of a difficult and risky venture. Although approved by Blair and in possession of a new injection of economic aid to the Palestinian Authority struggling to come to terms with their own decline and the growing influence of the political and religious extremists, it would be Cook's first visit to the region as Foreign Secretary (Cook had previously visited the region as Shadow Spokesperson in September 1996). The tour included a visit to Faisal Husseini (PLO representative in East Jerusalem), a meeting with PLO official Salah Ta'amri, and a visit to one of the newest Israeli settlements in the Occupied

⁹⁰⁷ Kampfner claims, as Foreign Secretary Cook had delayed visiting the Middle East on several occasions - for various reasons - generating concerns: 'He [Cook] had toyed with the idea of using the three days to travel to the Middle East, but saw little merit in considering a visit to the region into such a short space of time. He considered going again on 4 November, to take in Israel, Gaza, Egypt, and possibly Syria and Saudi Arabia; 'Scheduling difficulties' were cited. Indeed, his reluctance to visit the region in 1997 had caused some consternation in the Foreign Office. 'It took us a long time to engage Robin in the [Middle East] region', said one [un-referenced] official.' Kampfner, John (1998: 204) Chapter 14, *Retribution Time*

Territories in the East Jerusalem district - *Jebel Abu Ghneim* (re-named *Har Homa* by Israel).

Even under what passes for normal circumstances in the Middle East such a visit would have raised concerns, but with British, European, American and international frustration at Netanyahu's failure to implement key aspects of the Oslo agreements (Israeli troop re-deployments, a settlement freeze and movement restrictions on Gaza airport and borders), and the failure of Arafat to rein in the extremists, along with the increasing spiral of violence and counter-violence on both sides, it was bound to be more difficult than usual.

The visit to East Jerusalem was in many ways symbolic of New Labour's ethical dimension to foreign affairs as well as its commitment to a new multi-lateralist world: Cook was attempting to reinvigorate the Peace Process by reaffirming the view of the EEC that the settlement building was not only a violation of international law but an obstacle to peace. It was also a statement of intent that Cook meant to use Britain's Presidency to assert a more active role for the EEC.

In the event, Cook was ambushed and compromised by both sides: Israel decried the visit to Jebel as 'provocative' even before Cook left London; an agitated, placard-waving mob of Israeli settlers protesting at Cook's visit to the Occupied Territories were allowed to jostle and verbally abuse the British Foreign Secretary by Israeli security. Cook was further criticised by Israel for not including a visit to *Yad Vashem* (the Holocaust Memorial) even though with prior agreement of the Israeli government *Yad Vashem* had not been included because Cook had visited the site for three hours on his last visit. Then, after complaints from Netanyahu, a dinner - at which Cook had planned to meet the Labor Leader Ehud Barak - was cancelled and a planned meeting cut short. The walls of the British Consulate in Jerusalem were daubed with graffiti claiming Cook was anti-Semitic.

On the Palestinian side (although the official meeting with Hussein had been abandoned in an effort to appease Netanyahu) Faisal Hussein - with no prior knowledge or permission of British officials - had accosted Cook with a request that he lay a wreath at the village of Deir Yassin (the site of a massacre of Palestinians in

April 1948 by political Zionist para-militaries), and expressed profound offence that Cook had reneged on the arrangements to meet Hussein as a capitulation to Israel. Whatever the rights and wrongs of Cook's visit, as Kampfner says in summary:

'Whatever the rights and wrongs of the episode, it looked bad. Comparisons were made with David Mellor who, as a visiting junior Foreign Office minister, had berated an Israeli colonel in the Gaza Strip in 1988. The analogy was drawn of an American going to Belfast and seemingly siding with nationalists against unionists. Initial press coverage back home was disastrous. Cook was portrayed as gaffe-prone and insensitive, his blunt talking counterproductive among a political elite that makes a habit of taking offence.

A leader in *The Times* was particularly damaging to Cook. At the top was written: 'The artful radical.' Below it was the headline: 'Diplomatic Disaster. Cook has not helped British foreign policy or the peace process.'⁹⁰⁸

Although some parliamentary colleagues, EEC Foreign Ministers, and sections of the broad-sheet news papers supported Cook's stance, these views were generally lost amid the images of a British Foreign Secretary being buffeted in the mud and rain by protesters and the extensive diplomatic spat that followed. Cook's effort to move the agenda forward in the face of a deteriorating peace process was diverted by offended Israeli political elite and sympathetic allies at home. A month later, Blair made his own trip to the region, a trip which was portrayed as being 'designed to repair relations between the UK and Israel.'⁹⁰⁹ Cook's position as Foreign Minister was now in jeopardy. Kampfner claims it was not just the visit to the Middle East and difficulties on other foreign tours which ultimately undermined Cook, but a series and eventual culmination of related issues, one of the most serious being 'revelations about an extra-marital affair.'⁹¹⁰

⁹⁰⁸ Kampfner, John (1998: 222) Chapter 15, *The Relaunch*, quoting, *The Times*, March 18, 1998

⁹⁰⁹ Ibid., (1998: 222)

⁹¹⁰ Ibid., (1998: 223)

The limitations of New Labour in Government

For all the desires of Tony Blair and Robin Cook to make their mark on the international theatre, when it came to Israel and the Palestinians, they were actually able to achieve very little. This was not for want of trying, or as a result of the essentially pro-Israel inclinations of the Prime Minister. But as Cook stated:

‘We were always conscious at the Foreign Office that Downing St. was very sympathetic to the Israeli perspective. But that is not to deny that Tony himself really has a genuine interest in trying to get some kind of settlement. And he has put more work into Northern Ireland than any British Prime Minister, and I am quite sure that he believes that if he could get an entry he would bring some of that experience and those skills to the Middle East.’⁹¹¹

Indeed, it has been argued that Blair’s own position (as well as that of Michael Levy), and consequently the policy pursued by New Labour under his premiership, evolved over the early years of government into a more informed and even-handed positioning. As retired Labour MP David Watkins commented:

‘I haven’t got the access today [2003] that I had in 1997 but I think Blair has become much more middle-of-the-road on this whole issue, and I think he does recognise - and he has said this publicly - that the Palestinians have suffered a grave injustice, and until that is put right there will not be peace with justice and honour - I’m paraphrasing what he said - and that is what Blair has said on many occasions.’⁹¹²

The claims that there had been a shift in Blair’s position also occurred among some of his contemporaries on the backbenchers. Speaking retrospectively in 2006, some of the reasons behind Blair and New Labour’s shift towards a more balanced approach

⁹¹¹ Cook, Robin (02.11.2004: 5)

⁹¹² Watkins, David (06.07.2003: 2)

are captured by one of the new MPs that followed Blair into government in 1997, as Brian Iddon⁹¹³ states:

‘I have admired the Israelis in the past - their ability to ‘green’ the deserts, the socialist concept of the Kibbutz, and their ability to defend themselves against Arab attack in 1967. However, I now see what the Israelis are doing to their neighbours as something akin to what has happened to themselves over many centuries. I believe that the creation of the State of Israel, mainly for the Jews, with Palestinians on their own land as second-class citizens, was wrong - promoted by the Zionists, of course. However, having made that mistake, I will defend the right now for Israel to exist as a State, and I am therefore in favour of a two-State settlement in that region.’⁹¹⁴

Re-iterating Watkins’ ‘same coin’ analogy, Iddon also notes the role of the Israeli Labor Party in converting his own position to that of neutrality:

‘As I see it, it is obvious that the aim of successive Israeli Governments (Labor or Likud, even coalitions) is to create an expanded Israeli State, with Jerusalem as their capital. Ethnic cleansing has been going on in the region for decades; now it is accelerating. I cannot understand our Government’s stance on this issue unless it is not to offend the Americans.’⁹¹⁵

Above all, and with a sea-change in sections of the party clearly underway, Blair’s policy position towards the peace process was driven above all by his pragmatic approach to international relations, not by his pro-Israel sympathies, and his determination to achieve a role for Britain meant that the peace process achieved a high priority for his foreign policy team. As Cook again says:

⁹¹³ Dr Brian Iddon (b.1940) MP: (Bolton South East, 1997-present); Secretary to the All-Party Parliamentary Britain-Palestine Group.

⁹¹⁴ Iddon, Dr Brian (09.02.2006: 1) *Letter: Iddon-Nelson*, House of Commons

⁹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, (09.02.2006: 2)

‘I do not think honestly that there is anything in the four years that I was there [1997-2000] that we could have done more on the peace process to change the outcome. It was a very high priority for us, not just for me, but also for Michael Levy who put in an immense amount of effort in going back and forward, became well known and trusted by all the major players, contrary to what appeared in the press at the time he had a lot of respect from our Ambassadors because what our Ambassadors want wherever they are is access, and Michael actually got them access, and they relished that. And we came very close.’⁹¹⁶

Critics of Cook assert that despite the declared honourable intentions that emulated from the Mission Statement and the appointment of key reformers, change and success under his Foreign Affairs leadership was ultimately curtailed by the ‘special relationship’ with the United States. As Driver and Martell point out, ‘Cook had represented Labour’s ethical mission and its desire to challenge the traditional model of state sovereignty.’⁹¹⁷ Despite his efforts, and those of Blair himself ‘The new Labour government continued to fulfil the traditional British foreign policy role as the most loyal ally of the United States, especially in the Middle East.’⁹¹⁸

Robin Cook recognized the limitations of the Anglo-U.S. alliance. When asked about the role of Lord Levy as Blair’s special envoy, he suggested that - whatever the criticisms levelled at Blair for the appointment - Lord Levy might in fact have been able to prevent some of the errors made in the Geneva 2000 negotiations had Britain been able to maintain a more independent role. As Cook conveys:

‘To be frank, Michael Levy was criticised by the press who said Tony Blair should not be using him to do this sort of thing, but in the culture of the Arab world it is the most natural thing in the world that a close friend of the Prime

⁹¹⁶ Cook, Robin (02.11.2004: 5)

⁹¹⁷ Driver, Stephen & Martell, Luke (2006: 184)

⁹¹⁸ Ibid., (1998: 146)

Minister be sent on his behalf; it comes more naturally to them than any democratic role of politicians and Prime Ministers.’⁹¹⁹

Cook continues:

‘Unfortunately when Clinton organised the Geneva [March 2000] meeting they thought at that point that they were on the verge of an agreement, and he cut Britain out because they were approaching the Presidential elections and they wanted all the credit to go to America. . . . I think that it was just possible that they might have made more progress if they had kept Michel Levy involved.’⁹²⁰

Conclusion

The evidence in this chapter suggests that Blair’s and Cook’s neutralist policies made little progress as a consequence of the inconsistencies in the approaches of successive Israeli Labor and Likud governments towards the peace process. In the early years of the New Labour government, the honourable intentions initially based on Cook’s determination to apply an ethical dimension to foreign policy dramatically foundered on Netanyahu’s unravelling of much of the progress made through the Oslo peace process, to which New Labour was entirely committed. By the time Ehud Barak’s Israeli Labor Party had come to power in 1999 British influence was being even more firmly excluded from the process by their own American allies as Clinton sought, unsuccessfully, to secure an agreement before leaving office.

In terms of the trajectory of New Labour policy towards political Zionism, Israel and the Palestinians, there can be little doubt that Blair’s government, despite, and within the context of his own pro-Israel inclinations, was fully committed to even-handedness in approach, and neutrality in terms of policy. The exclusion of the left-wing and far-left of the party via the modernisation and reform processes initiated by Kinnock, continued by Smith, and expanded and accelerated under Blair, ensured that

⁹¹⁹ Cook, Robin (02.11.2004: 2)

⁹²⁰ Ibid., (02.11.2004: 2)

the policy trajectory did not swing further towards the Palestinians, despite the Israeli and Labor Party of Israel's role in the failure to progress the Oslo peace process. As the peace process disintegrated into the Second *Intifadah*, Blair's government substituted political support for the Palestinians with economic support, partly because in Blair's mind this was the most pragmatic response, and partly because it was in line with the pro-economic development Hindenite school agenda which had been inherited from old Labour, and partly because the leadership remained sympathetic to Israel, instinctively so in the case of Blair, in line with the historic *common origins* and *related philosophies* which they still considered to be based on relatively firm foundations.

The *internal determinants* of this progression towards a firmly neutralist policy position can therefore be understood as follows. Firstly, the pro-political Zionism of New Labour's key leadership figure, Tony Blair, was mitigated by way in which he had internalised the new international order, globalisation and his own personal religious beliefs. Liberal interventionism and the requirements of an ethical dimension to foreign policy required that he seek a means to alleviate Palestinian suffering, whilst pursuing a pragmatic foreign policy strategy. Secondly, the continued modernisation and reform of the party itself had removed the left-wing and far-left from positions of influence over foreign policy. Blair was surrounded by a Foreign policy team of his own making, including appointees and special envoys, and operating through a settee-style of decision and policy-making which circumvented both broader party based mechanisms and to some extent the contribution and scrutiny of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The *external determinants* that influenced the shift in New Labour's policy trajectory included the altered international environment (which necessitated - in Blair's view - the liberal humanitarian interventionist approach); the Oslo peace process itself (which enabled New Labour to focus on the apparent reconciliation of the two parties to the Israel-Palestinian conflict and thereby evade its own *essential dilemma*); the exclusionary policies of the United States (which restricted the British role to a supportive, economic development-based contribution, which could be located within the pragmatism and pro-development agenda of New Labour more generally); and the election in 1996 of Netanyahu's Likud government in Israel (which New Labour's

early initiatives to explore a window of opportunity when the American presidency was still remotely open to a role for Britain) but came to falter as Netanyahu drove to reverse aspects of Oslo which he viewed were disadvantageous to Israel. And in a strongly related sense, what this chapter further conveys is that regardless of New Labour's ethical dimension to foreign policy and the doctrine of international intervention, and its constitutional commitment to socialism, UN resolutions and international law, the party was not prepared to apply these policies and principles universally. Despite the fact that all the prerequisite criteria guiding the decision to approve and implement sanctions and facilitate military intervention in the Balkans and Iraq, for example, was evident, it is clear that this criteria and approach would not be applied to the Israel-Palestinian conflict, irrespective of whether Likud or Labor were in power.

It was perhaps a matter of supreme irony that the *internal* and *external determinants* conspired to create a willingness and ability within New Labour to pursue an Israel-Palestinian peace process - without abandoning either the historic connections with Israel, or the desire of significant sections of the party for a just settlement for the Palestinians, - at the moment when the Oslo peace process was at its lowest ebb, and from which it declined further. It had been the Oslo process that essentially facilitated this New Labour policy, which was now being equally scuttled by American presidential aspirations, Israeli intransigence and a politically compromised Yasser Arafat. These combined factors excluded the New Labour government from the international role to which its leaders aspired, and from which the psychological, ideological and political components of the *essential dilemma* had hitherto conspired to prevent.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

This thesis has provided an historical survey of the relationship between the Labour Party in Britain with political Zionism, and more specifically the way in which that relationship has impacted upon Labour Party policy towards political Zionism, Israel and the Israel-Palestinian conflict. The thesis sought to identify the root source of Labour's historically pro-political Zionist position, and to examine its evolution through successive decades in response to both the internal dynamics of the party itself, and the external environment within which it was operating. Specifically, individual chapters demonstrated the following:

Chapter 1 located the initial pro-political Zionism of the early Labour Party in the perceived *common origins, related religious philosophies* (collectively referred to in this thesis as the psychological aspect and component of the *essential dilemma*) and the perceived *shared socialist ideology* of the Labour Party and political Zionist movement. It was determined that the influence of these factors upon leading Labour figures created a pro-political Zionist party consensus and the foundations upon which a near century of relations were to be based. This period also facilitated a profound and unique bond between Labour and political Zionism that was more akin to a family blood tie than what might normally be associated with alliances of political and religious parties possessing commonalities; this special tie was a major component of the *essential dilemma* condition that became of increasing importance as the inherent ideological contradictions located in the relationship arose and increased as both the realities of political Zionism and Palestine became more widely known and understood. Labour found temporary sanctuary from the excesses of the *essential dilemma* in the periods it was not in government office, and more particularly, amid the emergent and overwhelming realities of the Nazi genocide, - the Holocaust, responding with the adoption of the most pro-political Zionist policy position in the party's history in 1944.

Chapter 2 addressed the period from 1945 to 1962, showing how, in the aftermath of the Holocaust, the influence of the *essential dilemma* resurfaced. On forming a government, the contradiction between Labour's traditional pro-political Zionist sympathies and 1944 policy conflicted with the overriding obligation to prioritise British national interests in the face of the greatest moral impediment created by the predicament of Jewish refugees and the all too prevalent realities of political Zionism and Palestine.

Chapter 3 covering the period from 1963 to 1979 showed how, despite the leadership of Harold Wilson, (who represented the embodiment of Labour's pro-political Zionist traditions) key *external determinant*, such as the 1967 and 1973 wars and the re-emergence of a distinct Palestinian dimension to the conflict, combined to further raise the spectre of the *essential dilemma* substantially deferred by the moral post-Holocaust impediment and creation of the State of Israel. The net effect of these factors was a further sequence of internal division embodied in the development of the deviation process towards a neutralist position, culminating in the open rebellion by some Labour figures against the pro-Israel directorship of the leadership.

Chapter 4 addressed the 1980s, a period characterised by Labour's shift to the left-wing in the leadership, the decision-making body of the NEC, and the TUC. This, in conjunction with some seminal *external determinants* in the shape of Israel's invasion of Lebanon and the related *Intifadah*, generated an anomaly in the form of the adoption of an overtly pro-Palestinian policy by Labour in 1982. Subsequent internal Labour reforms under the pragmatist - Neil Kinnock - placed the party on a clearly neutralist trajectory that prospered in the post-Oslo period, increasingly ensuring that Labour did not return to its traditional pro-Zionist/Israel policy position.

Chapter 5 builds upon the evidence produced in preceding chapters that, in the absence of a clear and consistent ideological position within Labour towards political Zionism and the Israel/Palestinian question, key individuals within the leadership (including both front and backbenches) have been able to shape policy by ardent advocacy of their own positions and prejudices. The thesis is brought into the contemporary era by specifically addressing the years from 1994 to 1997. In this period Tony Blair became party leader, reforming and reformulating the Labour Party

as New Labour and imposing his own vision of foreign policy and foreign policy-making upon the party, and latterly, the Labour government. The chapter suggests that his personal influence has been seminal in determining Labour Party foreign policy both in, and out of government, and therefore examines the origins and philosophical basis of his own approach to foreign policy-making.

Chapter 6 addresses the period from 1997 to 2001, and specifically the formulation of New Labour policy towards political Zionism and the Israel-Palestinian question under a Tony Blair-led government. It shows how New Labour's election to government ushered in a select cabinet style of special advisors in decision-making, within the context of an ethical dimension to foreign affairs and the introduction and selective application of the doctrine of humanitarian intervention. Whilst initially apparently released from the more problematic constraints created by the *essential dilemma* with the advent of the Oslo Accords in 1993 (which had seen the two parties to the conflict reaching an apparent agreement), the subsequent unravelling of the Oslo process forced Tony Blair and his foreign minister, Robin Cook, to once more engage with the psychological, ideological and political contradictions epitomized within the components of the *essential dilemma*.

Throughout the entire period (1900-2001), Labour's policy trajectory has altered from being fundamentally pro-political Zionist to being essentially neutralist (after a brief flirtation with pro-Palestinianism during the 1980s). The neutralist position has emerged as the closest thing to a consensus, which can include both pro-political Zionists and those members for whom socialist commitments make support for a colonialist Israel impossible. At the same time, neutralism has been a means to evade substantively addressing the origins, source and continuity of the *essential dilemma*. In making this trajectory deviation towards neutralism, the influence of key individuals has been to some extent diluted, although the issue itself has remained the domain of highly-motivated individuals on both sides of the dilemma.

How then might we evaluate the entirety of this relationship during the three eras: historical, modern and contemporary? The overall argument in this thesis is that the British Labour Party and the political Zionist movement formed and possessed a unique relationship, based on several key factors. In its earliest and crucial period the

basis of relations was undoubtedly built upon the perceived *common origins* derived from the *related religious philosophies*, and the *shared socialist ideology* which bound to create a unique idealist political identity and affiliated alliance. But equally, if not perhaps more importantly, these *common origins* in conjunction with the shared social, political and economic circumstances and experience of poverty, injustice and struggle, combined to forge and cement not just a deep-seated and fierce socialist affinity between Labour and related figures and political Zionists, but an equally profound emotional bond, a *crie de coeur*, and something more aligned to a family kinship with all associated ties, loyalties and prejudices; epitomised in the way Labour figures referred to the political Zionists as our ‘sisters’ and the Labor Party of Israel that ‘bears the same name’ as the British Labour Party.

There is also little doubt and much evidence to support the claim that, particularly among Labour MPs and related figures with no or little knowledge of political Zionism and/or the realities of Palestine, that relations began and were continued in good faith and socialist sincerity; amid the slums and ghettos in which the vast majority of Labour and political Zionist figures were born and raised, and from which the Labour Party and the Zionist movement was founded and emerged, relations were initially and largely innocently located in the common struggle of purpose and for the most part, genuinely located in a socialist identity, aspirations, and methodology.

The Historical Era: 1900-1944

The fact that the political Zionist movement achieved such a degree of sustained support from Britain was a remarkable achievement in itself; the fact that it received - and has continued to receive - the support of the British socialist Labour Party is in many ways, even more remarkable. There is evidence to support the claim that some of this support was undoubtedly based on understandable ignorance, and less understandable expediency, as well as cultural prejudice. One of the reasons the political Zionists were so successful in developing relations with Labour stems from the fact that political Zionism was presented to Labour figures as being a socialist mass-Jewish movement that sought to liberate Jews from endemic persecution by facilitating mass immigration to Palestine, where a socialist utopia could be established to the advancement, inclusion and gratitude of the indigenous peoples, the Palestinians (references to native peoples began to occur as it became evident that

Palestine was not in fact ‘empty’ as at first claimed by some individuals and sections of the Zionist movement).

It is clear that the political Zionist leaders and activists were not entirely, or always directly to blame for this misperception among Labour MPs and related figures as to the realities of Zionism and Palestine; whether by design or circumstance, ignorance and/or expediency, from the earliest periods any number of key Labour figures from the highest echelons of the party hierarchy can be found actively propagating the Zionist philosophy and agenda for world Jewry and Palestine. During the first parliamentary debate on Palestine to involve a Labour MP, Josiah Wedgwood claimed in 1922 that ‘Zionism was creating a new society, based on democracy and progress, that it was welcomed by the Arab [Palestinian] common people and opposed only by feudal landlords. The common people . . . stood to benefit enormously from the developments that the Jewish people would bring.’⁹²¹ Wedgewood’s assertions came to epitomise the perceptions, views and positions of a generation of Labour MPs and related figure.

The realities, however, of both political Zionism and Palestine, were all too frequently at variance with these claims, and as a consequence so were the subsequent perceptions and policy positions of Labour figures and the party. As the academic Michael Shalev says, socialist Zionism was a ‘particular branch of European Zionist thought and activity’ that actually ‘arose out of the polarization of Jewish socialists,’⁹²² and that polarization was the result of the majority more nationalistic revisionist sections of the Zionist movement, which was anything but socialist. Similarly, the argument that the mass of persecuted Jewry sought to go to Palestine was also at best exaggerated, and at worst, the subject of misinformation and propaganda designed to direct the huge Jewish exodus from Russia and Eastern Europe from reaching the Americas, thereby compelling them to enter Palestine, to

⁹²¹ Watkins, David (1996: 112) *quoting*, Josiah Wedgwood, March 9, 1922, Hansard, col. 1575-1584

⁹²² Shalev, Michael. (1992: 35) *Labour and the Political Economy in Israel*, Chapter 2, *Accounting for the Exclusivism. The Histadrut and the Palestinians*, (New York: Oxford University Press)

adopt and facilitate the political Zionist philosophy by converting Palestine into the modern state of Israel.

Nevertheless, the implication that 'Zionism equalled Socialism'⁹²³ and *visa versa*, in the context of the almost overwhelming ignorance of the realities of political Zionism and Palestine at that time, interspersed with Zionist propaganda - which had a 'dubious reputation as far as the truth was concerned'⁹²⁴ - was an alluring and potent force. And particularly so, when combined with varying degrees of expediency and more than a smidgen of cultural prejudice centred on the notion that as a quintessentially European, occidentally derived ideology, political Zionism offered salvation to Jews from persecution, all of which came to understandably provide a 'powerful and attractive argument for British Socialists.'⁹²⁵ As a consequence, it was this perceived socialist linkage that as Watkins' says, came to be 'unassailably planted in the minds of two generations of Labour activities' to provide what many Labour figures considered to be a 'definitive basis'⁹²⁶ for Labour's close, supportive and sympathetic relationship with political Zionist figures and the philosophy of political Zionism. As Morrison's 1948 reminiscence poignantly underlines, in a 1936 Palestine - ironically on the eve of the Palestinian revolt - he had witnessed 'Socialism on the highest level.'⁹²⁷

Furthermore, the gradually emerging realities of Palestine among Labour figures - not least the actual existence of the indigenous Palestinians - were also heavily at a variance with established perceptions among Labour figures (in its most extreme form, the belief that Palestine was empty). In terms of the Palestinians, for the most part, the political Zionist enterprise in Palestine had been exclusive and detrimental,

⁹²³ Watkins, David (1996: 112)

⁹²⁴ Shapira, Anita. (1992: 42) *quoting*, Theodor Herzl, *The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, Patai, R. [Editor] (1960) (New York: Herzl Press & Thomas Yoseloff), June 7, 1895, 1:40

⁹²⁵ Watkins, David (1996: 112)

⁹²⁶ *Ibid.*, (1996: 112)

⁹²⁷ Donoghue, Bernard & Jones, George W. (2001: 256), *quoting*, Herbert Morrison, Speech to Labour conference, quoted in *Jewish Chronicle*, May 21, 1948

generating intense Palestinian resentment as they were gradually dispossessed of land by successive influxes of Jewish immigrants. The realisation of Palestinian existence and the gradual awareness that they were also resident, distinctive as Arabs and possessed a deep affinity and attachment to a land they had inhabited continuously for some seven centuries came to form a key part of the *essential dilemma*, particularly as this situation escalated into frequent bouts of open disorder and violence.

Although it remained a firm and relatively successful policy of the political Zionists to emphasise the generic Arab identity of the Palestinians, with all the associated geo-demographic implications and connotations that brought about in the context of the Palestinian-Zionist issue (notably the concept of transfer of the Palestinians to 'Arab' territories elsewhere, and the Zionist argument that Palestine represented a fraction of the wider 'Arab' territories), the existence and determination of the Palestinians to assert their identity and their claim to Palestine also remained a major source of Labour-political Zionism tensions, as well as forming a core component of the *essential dilemma*. Had Palestine been empty, or the Palestinians been entirely nomadic Bedouins, then the emerging realities of political Zionism as a nationalist, colonial and para-military ideology and movement might not have had the same degree or number of negative implications for Labour and its relations with political Zionism. But the emergent realities of the Palestinians, which grew more effective and pronounced as Palestinian nationalism gained currency, in conjunction with the related, if belated acknowledgement of the likely consequences of the political Zionist agenda for Palestine of creating a Jewish/political Zionist state, elevated the ideological contradictions for Labour, that to a lesser extent were already evident and problematic, to a new and increasing height.

Similarly and relatedly, had Labour remained a party of opposition many of these issues arising from the disclosure of realities in Palestine and of political Zionism might have been of significantly less importance. However, Labour's meteoric rise to government barely twenty-four years after it was founded, and a second government term (1929-1931), which unfortuitously coincided with some of the most eventful developments in Palestine and within political Zionism, ensured the *common origins* and *essential dilemma* would become an increasingly problematic contradiction for

Labour individuals as well as for the party, particularly in terms of its decision and policy-making.

The significance of the *shared socialist ideology* to the *basis* and *nature* of Labour-political Zionist relations is further complicated by the additional component within the *common origins*, - the *related religious philosophies* dimension. The significance of Christian religion in the founding motivations and principles of the Labour Party are epitomised by the popular maxim - attributed to Morgan Phillips (Labour Party General Secretary, 1944-1961) - that 'socialism in Britain owed far more to Methodism than to Marx.'⁹²⁸ The fact that the Labour Party and political Zionism were founded upon religious foundations provided an important and readily available *basis* for the establishment and maintenance of Labour-political Zionist relations, as such, much of its *nature* emulated from their *related religious philosophies*. As with the *common origins* and perceived *shared socialist ideology* the mutual familiarity and over-lapping beliefs between Christian and Judaic faiths among Labour and related figures ensured that the relationship was, in some instances, bound together as surely as the Old Testaments and the New Testaments.

It is perfectly evident that the religious backgrounds, education and belief of Labour and related figures were a key aspect in determining and sustaining the *basis* and the *nature* of relations between Labour and political Zionism. The biblical romanticised perceptions of Palestine generally acquired within an occidental culture steeped in the Christian faith, its traditions and values, often instilled from birth, and furthered by primary, secondary and higher education curricula, meant Labour figures were invariably more versed in the history of the ancient Hebrews than the history of their own parliamentary origins located in the seventeenth century mire of the English civil war. This provided generations of fertile minds, and crucially receptive hearts, for concepts like the Jewish 'return,' and convenient slogans like 'an empty land, for a people without land' upon which the political Zionist philosophy was essentially premised.

⁹²⁸ Wilson, Harold (1964 [c]: 1) *The Relevance of British Socialism*, Chapter 1, *What is British Socialism?* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson)

From Keir Hardie to Tony Blair, committed Christian and Jewish Labour and related figures played key roles in aligning the socialist Labour Party to Christianity and Judaism, and by extension, to political Zionism; this aligning occurred to the extent that it gradually became difficult for some Labour figures to discern the possible difference between terms like 'Jew' and 'Jewish' and 'Zionist' and 'Zionism,' when in reality being Jewish does not necessarily equate to being a Zionist, and *visa versa* (the practice of interchanging, replacing and categorising terms of reference is also located in the attempt to replace the term 'Palestinian/s' with 'Arab/s' in what this thesis calls the *currency of language*).

What is clear in a summary of the historical era is that with the sobering predicament of the Jews in Europe becoming progressively more desperate, to eventually culminate in the Nazi genocide, Labour figures and the party generally found a mechanism amid the unprecedented gravitas of this Jewish calamity, to suppress the ideological contradictions and the worst influence of the *essential dilemma*; by adopting a policy-position in 1944 which advocated creating a Jewish state from all of mandate Palestine with the encouraged transfer of the Palestinians, Labour figures arrived at a consensus, which assumed the moral impediment of the Jewish case in Europe overrode the Palestinian case in Palestine. While this policy undoubtedly resulted from the influence of the Holocaust, it was also based on the factors generated by the *common origins*, ignorance, and expediency, and to an extent, cultural prejudice. Above all else perhaps, the 1944 policy position at the close of the historic era was also the result of the psychological aspect of relations, and crucially, the ability of the political Zionists to secure their adoption by Labour. For by the time the full realisation of the realities of political Zionism and Palestine had been established in the minds of Labour and related figures, many were already too psychologically involved to respond fully to the ideological and political contradictions presented by the relationship; a situation akin to what has been described as 'This Cuckoo in the nest.'⁹²⁹ Amid the contradiction the ornithological metaphor used to describe the location of the political Zionist Movement at the heart of the British Labour Party and political system has other appropriations: for the

⁹²⁹ Adams, Michael & Mayhew, Christopher (2006: ix) *Introduction*, quoting, Tim Llewellyn [former BBC Middle Eastern correspondent, 1974-1984]

Cuckoo, as with the political Zionists, has an astonishing ability to replicate the markings of the hosts parent's eggs to ensure its adoption and nourishment, despite the growing contradictions posed by the emerging and expanding evidence of another species' hatchling. For the most part, by the time Labour came to realise what political Zionism really comprised, it was too late: to all intents and purposes the commitments and promises had already largely been made.

The Modern Era: 1945-1993

If the more excessive prevarications of the political Zionists - that reached a peak in 1930-1931 - were largely avoidable during the inter-war period by a Labour leadership and party increasingly perplexed by the ideological contradictions exacerbated by the disturbances that pitted the years from 1920 to 1939 in Palestine, the moral imperative created by the Holocaust and the Jewish survivors effectively dissolved any remaining significant resistance within mainstream Labour to political Zionist aspirations towards Palestine.

While Labour felt the decision in 1944 to offer Palestine as a resolution to centuries of endemic Jewish persecution in Europe and Russia was now morally irrefutable in the wake of the Holocaust and its survivors, the Palestinians understandably saw no such justification. The fate and plight of Jews at the hands of the Fascist and Nazi regimes had been an entirely European affair. As such, the offer of Palestine by an imperial power did not equate with either the moral justification, or Palestinian aspirations for self-determination, or indeed the realities of Palestine; this was the case before the Holocaust, and from a Palestinian perspective in particular, the case had not changed in its aftermath. If anything, the situation was more intractable than ever in terms of equating the problems of Europe with those of Palestine: the insatiable quest for Palestinian self-determination and independence, along with the resurgence of Arab nationalism set in the more assertive anti-colonial atmosphere of the post-1945 world, were powerful and still growing forces of resistance, to which Britain, with strategic national interests in the Middle East, the Indian Sub-Continent and Muslim south-east Asia, certainly had to take into consideration, and sometimes heed.

In a remarkably short space of time Labour's predicament had also changed. The policy commitments of December 1944, made while Labour was a war-time coalition

member, were quite suddenly and rudimentally transformed with Labour's somewhat surprise election to government in July 1945. The duty of the Labour government was to protect British interests, which were inextricably bound to the wider Middle Eastern region, its leaders and peoples, and most notably with the emergent Arab states for strategic reasons, and increasingly, those of oil. In the context of a coalition, Palestinian existence or objections were of little or no impediment, but as a government, and in the context of a wider duty to British national interests, Palestine and the Palestinian position had important and far-reaching implications. In short, Labour's idealist ultra pro-political Zionist policy position of 1944 was made redundant by the demands of national political realism after the party's election to government.

These phenomenal circumstances and the enormous questions they raised for Labour figures and party policy eventually established two fairly defined positions within Labour: those who advocated something akin to the ultra-pro-political Zionist 1944 position, and those who advocated the pro-British national and strategic interest's position. The years 1945 to 1949 were essentially characterised by the internal tussles between these two positions. At the same time, events and issues derived from *external determinants* in Europe, Palestine, the wider Middle East and the United States, conspired to pressure Labour into first abandoning the mandate and Palestine, then recognizing the State of Israel. This precipitated an unceasing dichotomy for Labour as it attempted a precarious balancing act between the traditional ideological tendencies towards sympathy and support for political Zionism and then the Jewish state, against the more practical realist alliances with the Arab states required to ensure the post-war recovery was sustained via oil and trade, and the additional requirement to contain Soviet expansionism.

With the state of Israel now in existence and the Palestinians at the conclusion of the 1947-1949 Arab/Palestinian-political Zionist/Israel war either absorbed within the boundaries of the State of Israel, or floundering in refugee camps under the auspices of Jordan (West Bank) and Egypt (Gaza Strip), Labour felt the consequences of the *essential dilemma* - derived in part from the predicament of the Palestinians - would be submerged and alleviated by what amounted to a *fait accompli* - in the shape of Israel. And that, with the simple passage of time, and the distractions of subsequent

events like the onset of the Cold War, the Palestinians would - as 'Arabs' - be absorbed by their host states. However, the rise of the post-colonial struggles and the assurgency of Arab nationalism in the formidable frame of Colonel Abdel Nasser, served to resurrect the core aspect of the *essential dilemma* as the existence of the Palestinians, their distinct identity, attachment and belief in the right of their claim to Palestine aligned itself with the greater Arab nationalist movement. Despite the simmering injustices felt by the Palestinians resulting from the impingement of a European crime - the Holocaust - and resulting guilt upon their national existence, they not only refused to be silenced, obscured and absorbed, but re-surfaced to become, once again, a core factor belying the ideological contradiction in the *basis* and *nature* of Labour's relations with political Zionism.

Not only did Palestinians resolutely refuse to be absorbed by neighbouring Arab states, but the emergence of the Palestine National Council (PNC) and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) provided the political means to direct a national collective consciousness into a decision and policy-making process. By opting to reject offers to become Jordanian nationals and aligning themselves with the policies of Arab states that refused to permanently absorb Palestinian refugees into their populations as a resolution to the anti-Semitism and guilt of Europe, the substance and foundations of a national Palestinian political entity were created. Furthermore, in the nullifying epitaph of the Arab defeats by Israel in the 1967 and 1973 wars, the Palestinians re-directed their nationalist struggle from an over-reliance on their host states towards greater self-reliance; this gave a resurgence to their own distinct Palestinian identity, and thus, a reaffirmed their claim to Palestine. These developments initially took the form of a guerrilla campaign against Israel, and a disastrous employment of international terrorism (epitomised by assassinations, the hi-jacking of civil aircraft and the 1972 Munich Olympics attack); this tactic eventually evolved into a reform and modernisation programme, which placed a greater emphasis on political and diplomatic initiatives as much as it did the armed resistance. This reform process culminated in Yasser Arafat's United Nations General Assembly address (1974) and the 1988 Algiers declaration. As these dramatic political and diplomatic Palestinian initiatives occurred and developed so a core aspect of the *essential dilemma* resurfaced as a re-energised issue for Labour, primarily, because while the Palestinian national movement remained engaged in

armed resistance and terrorism the influence of the *essential dilemma* could be suppressed to a greater degree by the expressed abhorrence of Labour figures to the terrorist tactics employed by the PLO and affiliated groups.

As these Palestinian factors extended into the realm of Labour as a party of government (1964-1970 and 1974-1979), the Palestinian dimension of the broader Arab-Israel conflict came to represent an increasingly unavoidable component of the *essential dilemma*, especially as Labour attempted to reconcile its traditional and instinctive support for Israel, with the constitutional duty to secure British interests (Arab oil and trade) which again came under acute focus during the Arab-Israel conflicts of 1967 and 1973. The efforts to ignore the Palestinian dimension became even more problematic as sections of the party deviated away from the pro-Israel position of the leadership as they became ever more aware of the Palestinians as a central part of the Arab-Israel problem, and actively and vocally committed to the search for a resolution.

As the memories and influence of the Holocaust declined as those with direct or indirect experience of its consequences diminished and new parliamentary generations entered the fray, so the loyalties to Labour's traditional pro-political Zionist position became increasingly challenged by what became the deviation process. The deviation process of disaffected Labour figures has its beginnings in the 1956 Suez affair, which accelerated after 1967, and erupted into open parliamentary rebellion in 1973 as sections of the party stood against the pro-Israel leadership of Harold Wilson. The deviation of Labour figures found its greatest expression in the establishment of two parliamentary related groups - CAABU (1967) and the LMEC (1969) - as the need to understand and resolve the contradiction the Israel-Palestinian situation presented for Labour gained momentum and support. This deviation process made tentative progress within the leadership as the pro-Israel grip wielded by Wilson was gradually prised towards a more moderate fair-minded and pragmatic neutralism advocated and applied by Labour leader James Callaghan after Wilson's retirement in 1976.

The more even-handed approach of Callaghan coincided with the electoral decline of the Labor Party of Israel and the ascendancy of Menachem Begin's right-wing Likud

bloc to government from 1977 to 1984. The more extreme policies of the Likud - notably the rapid acceleration and expansion of settlement building - gave further credence and impetus to the deviation process, particularly as Labour figures lost an additional sense of distinction as Israeli Labor Party figures accepted key ministerial posts in a series of Likud led coalition governments from 1984 - notably Yitzhak Rabin (Defence Minister) and Shimon Peres (Foreign Minister) - that only served to further smudge the ideological boundaries and apportioning of responsibility for what are illegal acts in international law. The Labor Party of Israel's participation in Likud coalition governments after 1984 raised more consternation as the settlement programme expanded and accelerated after the conclusion of the Camp David peace treaty with Egypt in 1978. The treaty effectively neutralised the largest Arab army to directly border Israel, allowing Israel to invade Lebanon in 1979 and 1982, and to suppress the civil population of the West Bank (1987-1993) during the first *Intifadah* in order to facilitate the next phase of Israeli settlement and associated land confiscations in the quest for an *Eretz* (greater) Israel. The Israeli Labor Party's role in this sequence of events resulted in a growing disaffection of an increasing number of British Labour figures, as they began to questioning whether Labor in Israel was simply a 'different side to the same coin?' As a result, the deviation process continued to progress and expand towards a non-partisan consensus and neutralist policy position in light of these events in Israel, the Occupied Territories and the Middle East.

One of the consequences of the radicalisation of the Palestinian national movement in the late 1960s and 1970s was that it caught the attention and support from individuals and sections on the left-wing and far-left of the Labour Party. The socialist secular politics of Yasser Arafat's *Al-Fatah*, the largest political party within the umbrella of the Palestine National Council and PLO, and the advent of a plethora of Palestinian socialist, Marxist-Leninist and communist parties - notably the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and the Palestine Communist Party (PCP) - all found a degree of resonances with the leftist radicalism of the period. This radicalism afforded a level of influence upon the more mainstream and traditional left-wing of the Labour Party culminating, after the capturing by the left-wing of the party leadership (1980) and the decision and policy-making mechanism of the NEC, some local parties and sections of the trades

union movement, with the adoption of an overtly pro-Palestinian policy in 1981. At the same time, the more moderate party consensus continued with the deviation process towards a neutralist conclusion, the policy position based on even-handedness being affirmed after the decline and fall of the left-wing after the 1983 general election defeat and the arrival of the pragmatist moderate left-wing figure of Neil Kinnock as party leader.

As a representative of a relatively new demographic and parliamentary generation, Neil Kinnock possessed arguably fewer pro-political Zionist/pro-Israel instincts than any other preceding Labour Leader of the modern era. While he clearly illustrated his awareness and allegiances to political Zionism and the resulting State of Israel in the context of his knowledge and sympathies resulting from the Holocaust, because of his age he is also, if not equally aware of Palestinian history and their current predicament in relation to the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Additionally, as a pragmatist, Kinnock was prepared - particularly as an opposition leader - to overtly challenge the extremes of Israel in pretty much equal quantity and quality as he was that of the Palestinians.

Kinnock was fortuitous in the sense that he inherited a Labour Party recovering from the shock of the surge to the left-wing, with the resulting anomaly of the party's pro-Palestinian policy position - bucking a pro-political Zionist consensus tradition extending to 1917 - and its calamitous 1983 electoral defeat. These factors combined to enable Kinnock to appear like a moderate to the pro-Israel encampment, simply by advocating equitability in approach and a position of neutralism. Kinnock's neutralism was derived as much from his ultra-pragmatism born of a desire to return Labour to government as it was determined by his concern for the predicament of the Palestinians, which he never really viewed as a case based on national self-determination, preferring an Hindenite school of approach centred upon economic development and financial investment. However, with the advent of the wholesale reform and modernisation programme of the Labour Party and the protracted disturbing struggle in the Occupied Territories between 1987 and 1992, Kinnock was able to not only forge ahead with his own reform programme, but carried the Labour Party resolutely towards a consensus and policy position founded on neutralism. In doing so, Kinnock avoided the more troubling aspects of the *essential dilemma* by

addressing what he viewed as the concerns of 'both sides' as he sought to steer Labour towards a return to government.

Neil Kinnock's pragmatism and neutralism extended to his successors - John Smith and Margaret Beckett (Acting Leader) - who were fortunate to benefit from the inclusion of a rare *external determinant* that positively assisted Labour's tentative efforts to address the *essential dilemma*: the signing of the 1993 Oslo Accords. The agreement by the PLO and Israel to recognise each other almost, at the stroke of a pen, released Labour from a number of the restraints imposed by the *essential dilemma*, notably, the increasing discomfort and difficulties imposed by the deviation process and the mounting evidence - particularly from the 1980s - emphasizing not just the fundamental ideological contradiction in Labour's pro-Israel traditions and instincts, but the inherent problems this generated as Labour became increasingly pressured to address the *essential dilemma* by addressing Israel's conduct against the Palestinians in a more even-handed manner.

The Contemporary Era - New Labour: 1994-2001

With the election of Tony Blair as party leader and the fashioning of a New Labour Party from the philosophy of Blairism, the general pragmatic neutralist trend, with a pro-Israel undercurrent continued. As an arch ultra-pragmatist Blair sought a solution to the conflict on the rapidly crumbling foundations of the Oslo Peace Process.

Although for a range of internal reasons stemming mostly from Blair's early experiences of Labour's left-wing surge of the 1980s, foreign affairs were largely avoided in opposition (1994-1997); after assuming government in 1997 that avoidance of international politics became much less of an option. And in a bizarre twist of internal party dynamics, a frustrated Blair, increasingly excluded from domestic arena by a prudent chancellor, turned to the international arena he had so fervently tried to avoid as he strove to assert his own identity beyond the controls of an ever more resentful Gordon Brown. As Seldon says of Blair on domestic affairs, 'When at last he [Blair] did find his own agenda, early in the second term [2001], it

ran slap up against the Labour Party - and Gordon Brown.⁹³⁰ As a consequence it was as if the far-flung corners of a foreign field became forever England as Blair addressed international affairs with a degree of messianic passion that took Britain to war on five occasions in the space of five years.

For Blair, the experience of the early 1980s during Labour's left-wing lurch and subsequent mauling in the 1983 general election irreparably shaped his own political philosophy. Further successive election defeats in 1987 and 1992 only served to temper Blair's resolve to abandon socialism as an orthodox ideology, and to radically accelerate and extend the modernisation and reform of Labour with the central aim of attaining the party's election to government with the primary purpose of effecting real change in Britain. Blair's politics were also deeply influence by his background and the experience of his family. From his mother he acquired abundant self-belief and confidence, and inherited the foundations of what became a profoundly deep Christian faith (reinforced at university); from his father he learnt the values of self-reliance, progressive upward social and economic mobility. But from both parents he came to understand the limitations of family, religion and individualism as the intervention of ill-health imposed a radical re-evaluation, and a deep appreciation for the values of the socialist Welfare State, and later, the Labour Party from which it was founded.

It was the powerful combination of domestic and political experiences that moulded and directed Blair into the formulation of his own unique Third Way political philosophy, - Blairism. With his ascendancy to the party leadership in 1994, Blairism - the curious blend of Christian socialist values and social democratic pragmatism - was administered with missionary zeal across the breadth and width of the party and the issues of the day. Ultimately he completed the transformation process begun by Neil Kinnock and John Smith to convert the old Labour from an opposition party into New Labour as a party of government. However, Blair's 1980s experiences and the reform and modernisation drive were to have important implications for the Israel-Palestinian question.

⁹³⁰ Seldon, Anthony. Ballinger, Chris. Collins, Daniel & Snowdon, Peter (2004: 691)

Blair was not anti-Palestinian. In the first instance - as it was the case with foreign affairs generally - if he gave the Palestinians any thought at all it was invariably set in the context of his early political experiences: as one of a plethora of questionable causes adopted largely by the party's left-wing, Blair viewed the Palestinian issue through anti-left-wing and anti-idealist spectacles with lenses further distorted by ignorance, - and to an increasing extent, political expediency. The expediency factor became increasingly influential as the realities of the Palestinian predicament under occupation and settlement emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s to become a growing concern of the party's moderate centre ground. And while the gradual political and religious radicalisation of the Palestinian national movement further alienated Blair, as it only served to re-enforce his prejudices inherited from the 1980s, his general myopic condition exacerbated by his relative ignorance of the subject and early associations with pro-Israel influences as his political career blossomed, could not avoid entirely the neutralist deviation process, which refused to be acquiesced within his limited parameters to create a wider consensus.

Blair was, however, a pro-Israel figure. Not in the sense that he was an unquestioning convert to the philosophy of Zionism, in either its socialist, religious and Messianic manifestations, but because first and foremost, he was pro-Jewish. As an anti-ideologist Blair was as troubled by the rigid ideologically-based positions of the Labor Party of Israel and its commitment to state ownership, associated links with Israeli trade unions and the institutional dinosaur of the *Histadrut*, as he was of the left-wing idealism of the *Kibbutz* movement, which had lured so many Labour figures to political Zionism.

What made Blair pro-Israel was derived and largely determined from a number of important though equally complex and influential sources. A key source was his introduction to British Jewish communities - of which he had little prior experience - and their associations with related British political organs like *Poale Zion*, Labour Friends of Israel (LFI), the Labor Party in Israel, and thus many aspects of the State of Israel itself, and to a lesser extent, the links between the British trades union movement and those of Israel. As a long recognised source of political influence within the Labour Party, Blair was quickly made aware of the potential influence

these pro-Israel groups wielded upon the Jewish communities in terms of securing Jewish votes for Labour. Similarly, as with numerous other Labour figures, Blair was identified and groomed as a potential political asset to Israel from the earliest period of his career by Moshe Raviv and Michael Levy into developing relationships with an array of pro-Israel personalities and groups.

Aside the purely political aspects, Blair developed a deep admiration for the social and cultural structure of British Jewish communities. This was not just based upon related religion philosophies, but the links between the Judaic faith emulating from the synagogue, with the broader cultural and social basis of the Jewish communities, particularly the myriad of welfare and support groups, societies and charities that are an intricate part of a thriving and functional society. While invariably bound to a common Jewish religious identity and culture, of which a deep sense of community duty was an active reality, it was these aspects of Judaism and the British Jewish communities - also identified by Labour MPs Ian Mikardo and Greville Janner as being a sources of political support - that made a tremendous impact upon Blair; the Jewish faith and community model represented an embodiment of the brand of Christian socialism that he had acquired at Oxford, linking religious faith, community and society, socialist collective provision with the responsibility of the individual, all of which were in large part the products of his background, parents and early political life. It also provided a social and political template to key aspect of Blair's Third Way pragmatism.

However attracted Blair was to the Jewish communities, he still generally applied the principles of rejecting religious orthodoxy and political radicalism. As such, he did not readily engage with Jewish and Israel representatives unless they reflected the progressive and reformist approach to religious and political affairs, that were viewed to comprised the majority of Jewish New Labour supporters and the Israeli Labor Party during the Oslo peace process era.

Blair, like many generations of Labour figures before him, did not usually differentiate between Jews and Israelis, or Jews and political Zionists for that matter. His written and oral references flow from Jewish to Israeli, and back again, with a repeated interchangeable fluency as if there are no discernible differences.

Conversely, there is little room for doubt that Tony Blair viewed the Palestinians as a secondary partner in the Oslo peace process. It is clear that he has still retained a negative sense of his early experiences and perceptions of the Palestinians, and in some cases, what they still represent as an essentially reactionary, undeveloped and undemocratic people that possess a tendency towards political and religious fundamentalism. However, in the context of the Israel-Palestinian conflict Blair viewed this issue almost exactly as he had approached Northern Ireland: as a pragmatist, Blair held no truck with Israeli or Palestinian figures who were either or idealists or fundamentalist; the figures Blair was interested in were the realists, moderniser and reformist, the pragmatists such as Shimon Peres, Ehud Barak and Mahmoud Abbas,⁹³¹ and to a lesser extent, Yasser Arafat. As with the Good Friday negotiations, Blair was interested in the figures that were prepared to come to the centre-ground and make an agreement based on compromise.

In terms of Tony Blair's approach to the Israel-Palestinian conflict he was almost the complete pragmatist, 'working with what exists as opposed to what one would prefer to exist.' He approached Israel and the Palestinians as he did China, Iran, Syria or any number of countries and related issues: as long as they fulfilled certain conditions in that they were seen to be trying to reform and modernise, to democratise, moderate and amend the injustices for which they were criticised, he was prepared to negotiate.

Blair's *raison d'être* was to secure a settlement; in order to achieve that his priorities were located in finding the right political figures and circumstances to bring that about. While he freely acknowledged the historical grievances and injustices perpetrated against the Palestinians and in particular the Jews during the Holocaust, he did not extend that understanding and recognition as far as making it acceptable or a justification for pursuing confrontation and violence, or allowing past events to prevent reaching a comprised agreement. In that respect, and in conjunction with his pragmatism Blair's approach often bordered on indifference towards individuals like Benjamin Netanyahu, Ariel Sharon and concepts like *Eretz Israel* as he was about Gerry Adams' 'united Ireland' or Ian Paisley's 'no surrender' mentality. This

⁹³¹ Mahmoud Abbas [Abu Mazen] (b.1935) was born in Safed, Palestine (now northern Israel). PNA President, 2005-present; PM: PNA, March-October, 2003.

indifference simply reflected Blair's approach to the tribalism and senseless class-war confrontation of old Labour and the trades union movement: it was not personal, for Blair, it was the business of good individual responsibility and integrity in leadership and the progressive collective contribution and consensus of government towards decision and policy-making in foreign affairs.

In terms of the origins and source of the *essential dilemma* and its influence, Tony Blair was the first Labour leader and Prime Minister in eighty years (1917-1997) to be released from many of the restraints imposed by the contradictions arising from Labour's socialist principles and the party's traditional support for political Zionism. With the mutual recognition by Israel and the PLO produced via Oslo many of the sources and origins of the *essential dilemma* were vastly reduced, as Labour could place itself in the slip-stream of the pro-Oslo position without offending Israel, or the Palestinians. Furthermore, with Labour's virtual abandonment of socialism, and the adoption of a more flexible and vague social democratic identity the degree of the ideological contradiction also diminished.

Robin Cook differed from Blair on a number of crucial points which were to have profound consequences for Blair-Cook relations and New Labour's foreign policy towards the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Whereas Blair was schooled and gradually indoctrinated into acquiring an instinctively pro-Israel bias within the context of his dominating pragmatism, Cook had been introduced to the Palestinian perspective in terms of an education and experience from an early period in his political career. Again, in contrast to Blair, although Cook had by 1994 accepted the inevitability of Labour's reform meaning the jettisoning of socialist idealism, he had retained far more of his socialistic approach to the Israel-Palestinian issues, and foreign affairs generally: nowhere did this difference exclaim itself more profoundly and consequentially than in the declaration by Cook that New Labour's foreign policy would contain an 'ethical dimension.' As a result, Cook's less pragmatic and more rigidly principled approach to issues inevitably generated resistance, with the result that he was to become repetitively and disparagingly labelled as 'controversial' when, as in the case of Israel, all Cook was attempting was to apply were Labour policies and principles in an even-handed approach. As Blair came to realise the error in his choice of appointment and the ineffectiveness of his own special advisor - Michael

Levy - on the most contentious of contentious issues, the Israel-Palestinian conflict, and amid the early repercussions of Cook's troubled visit to the Occupied Territories and Israel in 1998, Blair and Cook consciously proceeded to develop a 'dual track' or 'dual policy' approach to foreign affairs.

Tony Blair's track was essentially based on the usual structure of informal non-traditional routes and practices, settee Cabinets, small groups of advisors and interested parties; Cook proceeded on the more traditional basis of UN resolutions (international law), Human Rights, moral and ethical principles. For Blair the primary consideration was one of economic development and financial investment, security and an end to terrorism (which invariably meant securing Israeli security and stemming Palestinian terrorism, not Israeli) with the avoidance of reference and inclusion of the United Nations or international law. Cook by comparison arguably had fewer such historical considerations: for him the inclusion and application of ethical principles and international law in Labour policy was far more inflexible and applicable. Cook was not entirely averse to interpretation and deviation from the 'letter of the Law', but he was far more orthodox than Blair. For Cook international law is international law, and a UN resolution is a UN resolution, whether it is violated by Saddam Hussein's regime occupying Kuwait, or Israeli settlement building in the Occupied Territories; a war crime is still a war crime, whether it is Saddam gassing Kurds in *Halabjah*, or the Israelis facilitating a massacre at *Sabra and Chatila* or *Qana*; ethnic cleansing is ethnic cleansing whether it be in Bosnia, Rwanda, East Timor or East Jerusalem. While for Blair, Palestinian suicide bombings and the failure or reluctance of Arafat to curtail these acts are an intolerable, motiveless and inexcusable abhorrence, similar acts of violence, Israel's firing of rockets from helicopter gunships into civilian apartment blocks in the Gaza Strip for example, while not condoned, is not unequivocally condemned by Blair using the same language. Arbitrary acts of Israeli violence invariably being acknowledged, if at all, with vague references that Israel as a sovereign democratic state has the right to defend itself and her people, accompanied by an obligatory appeal for Israeli restraint (often in the wake of civilian Palestinian casualties).

Generally speaking, for Cook there were few if any differences in the aforementioned examples: they are all equally unacceptable, and this equally unacceptable aspect is

most obviously and adequately illustrated in his 'both sides' analogy and approach; these examples are what divided the two Labour colleagues, and what led to the creation of the 'dual tract' approach. It was not the case that Blair and Cook were diametrically opposed in terms of the *basis* and *nature* of relations, or the content and principles of policy, but more a case of level and degrees. Nevertheless, if there was one figure who may have breached the beach-head to address the *essential dilemma* it was Robin Cook, but his replacement at the first respectable opportunity - and to Cook's evident displeasure⁹³² - in May 2001, was also perhaps a reflection of Blair's recognition of this possibility for the loss of consensus and the potential for trouble within the party this difference in style and emphasis of approach might instigate.

Common Origins and the *Essential Dilemma*: The Human Factor and the Language of Family

While there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the primary *basis* for Labour's relations with political Zionism is derived from the perceived *common origins, related religious philosophies* and *shared socialist ideology*, there is evidently something further that is not entirely attributable to any of these factors. The research findings suggest that additional factor is something more akin to a *crie de coeur*, a 'human factor,' which engages the heartfelt commitment of individuals and motivates them to pursue relations even in the face of glaring ideological and political contradictions. This human, personal, or what this thesis terms the psychological aspect of the *essential dilemma*, is arguably the most difficult to define, and yet it is perhaps the most important aspect; not least because the psychological aspect has not only survived the decline of socialist ideology and the secularization of British politics and society, but also because it remains the most irrational and illogical factor in many respects. It is identified in a rudimentary manner using the nearest possible analogy: that of a 'family member' reflecting the kind of instinctive, if not innate loyalty and affection often born of common parents and background, a degree of sympathy, support and loyalty usually derived from family bond, identity and kinship. What

⁹³² Claire Short says the replacement of Robin Cook caused 'considerable tension and there was a delay before Robin accepted his new post' and speculates the 'real reason for removing Robin' was that Blair already knew the 'views of the incoming US administration on Iraq.' Short, Claire (2004: 107-108)

makes it so important within the *essential dilemma*, is that it appears to be more able to circumvent the many contradictions posed by Labour's relationship with political Zionism that result from socialist ideology and principles, politics generally, and religious philosophy and faith.

One of the most important examples of this 'human factor' is often located in the use of language by Labour and related figures when referring to political Zionism, or later Israel, which often seems closer to terms of endearment relating as much to family blood-ties and kinship as much as they do political, or even religious identities and allegiances. This occurred not just in the heady days of the early 1920 with Ramsay MacDonald, Josiah Wedgwood and alike, but continued with sufficient emotional energy to reduce 'tough and matter-of-fact' personalities like Herbert Morrison into a waxing 'sentimental'⁹³³ figure blurting to the House of Commons that political Zionism in Palestine was 'one of the most wonderful manifestations in the world,'⁹³⁴ and that the political Zionists were 'surely among the most splendid human types to be found anywhere in the world.'⁹³⁵ For many Labour MPs across the parliamentary generations, there was, and remained, a deep personal attachment and ideological affiliation, a 'unique'⁹³⁶ and 'special bond,'⁹³⁷ a 'special relationship'⁹³⁸ between Labour and the political Zionist movement.

This psychological attachment was far more understandable in an era when the Labour Party was heavily comprised of some of the most disadvantaged, ignorant figures desperately pre-occupied with local and national domestic affairs, and

⁹³³ Donoughue, Bernard & Jones, George W. (2001: 256) *quoting*, Susan Lawrence, Interview, Dr S. Levenberg.

⁹³⁴ Ibid., (2001: 256) *quoting*, Herbert Morrison, June 19, 1936, Hansard, vol. 313, col. 1387

⁹³⁵ Ibid., (2001: 256) *quoting*, Herbert Morrison, *Daily Herald*, August 22, 1935

⁹³⁶ Gorny, Joseph (1983: xii) *Preface*

⁹³⁷ Harris, Kenneth (1987: 158-159)

⁹³⁸ Musallam, Ramzi. (June 1989: 24) *quoting*, Labour Party Policy Review Document, (1989) *The Middle East*

‘surrounded by propagandizing’⁹³⁹ from colleagues and affiliated bodies like *Poale Zion*. In the period from 1900 to circa 1939 the ideological contradictions and the emerging *essential dilemma* posed by Labour’s socialism and political Zionism’s colonialist nationalism were largely by-passed by depicting political Zionism’s agenda for Palestine as a ‘socialist experiment, which by Labor Zionist definitions, would be non-imperialist;’ Zionist figures like Dov Hoz helped obscure the contradictions, securing Labour’s sympathy and support with a socialist emphasis - the *shared socialist ideology* - and by linking Labour’s ‘humanitarian impulses’ - the ‘psychological aspects’ - and affinity with the Holy Land - *shared religious philosophies* - to the ‘political aspects’ by asking the British Labour Party via statements and policies ‘to help Labor Zionism build its new Jerusalem in advance of the one it aspired to build itself.’⁹⁴⁰ However, it is clear that the perceptions and positions stemming from the psychological aspects, the deeply human factors, have, to a significant extent, remained imbued within the Labour Party and related figures with continuing consequences.

Despite the dramatic changes in terms of the education and knowledge among Labour and related figures, this profound sense of common identity manages to transcend the decades, events and changes in leadership, to be carried into the era of New Labour in opposition. As backbencher James “Jim” Cousins⁹⁴¹ said in 1995 of the Labor Party in Israel, ‘it bears the name of my own party and shares many of our hopes and traditions . . . they are our brothers and sisters.’⁹⁴² These sentiments were epitomised by the party leader and Prime Minister Tony Blair when he stated that, as a result of New Labour, and the decline of the left-wing, there had been a ‘remarkable renewal and strengthening of the deep roots between the Jewish community and the Labour

⁹³⁹ Lepskin, Fred Lennis (July 1986: 13) Chapter 1, *quoting*, Tom Clarke, (1950: 155) *Northcliffe in History: An Intimate Study of Press Power*, (London: Hutchinson) (Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, Canada)

⁹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, (July 1986: 12)

⁹⁴¹ James “Jim” Cousins (b.1944) MP: (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central, 1987-present)

⁹⁴² Cousins, Jim (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central) (01.03.1995), *Middle East Peace Process*, Hansard, col. 998

⁹⁴² Blair, Tony (09.12.1997: 3)

Party. It is one of Labour's proudest achievements.'⁹⁴³ Additionally, the links identified by Blair also extended to links with Israel, as Louise Ellman⁹⁴⁴ recounts as a new generation backbench MP the origins and influences of her pro-Israel instincts (amid her pro-Oslo position) which are quite literally based on family: 'In my youth I was a member of *Habonim Dror*, the socialist Zionist youth movement. I spent a year living in Israel on a *Kibbutz* from 1967-68. As a socialist I supported a collective lifestyle. I also have family and friends living in Israel.'⁹⁴⁵

Testimony to the durability of this 'special bond' is located in the fact that despite some sobering evidence as to the factual realities of both Palestine and Zionism, and later Israel and the Israeli Labor Party, Labour figures have remained fairly consistently resolute in the pro-Israel approach. This has been in particular contrast to Labour's approach to similar circumstances in Kosovo and Iraq, for example; in relation to Israel the application of sanctions or military intervention has remained muted and passive despite Israel's breaches of international law and UN resolutions extending over many decades.

Even in the wake of the 1967 war when Israel was still being generally depicted in the currency of language as a 'David vanquishing a hulking Goliath,'⁹⁴⁶ despite the fact that the very comprehensiveness of the victory had partly exposed the myth that Israel was the weaker party, the evidence was insufficient to move key Labour figures towards greater neutrality; and later, among the war crimes committed by Israel in Lebanon and the brutality towards the Palestinians some Labour figures remained 'anxious to somehow rationalize what Israel was *now* doing as an occupying power abusing *its* victims right under the glare of the television camera.'⁹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, an

⁹⁴³ Ibid., (09.12.1997: 3)

⁹⁴⁴ Louise Ellman (b.1945) MP: (Liverpool Riverside, 1997-present); Chair of the Jewish Labour Movement and Vice Chair Labour Friend's of Israel.

⁹⁴⁵ Ellman, Louise (28.03.2006: 1) *Email: Ellman-Nelson*, House of Commons

⁹⁴⁶ Hussein, Abdirahman A. (2002: 289) *Edward Said: Criticism and Society*, Chapter 5, *Culture and Barbarism: Eurocentric Thought and Imperialism; Zionism, Orientalism, and Euro-American Imperialism*, (London: Verso)

⁹⁴⁷ Ibid., (2002: 289)

increasing numbers of Labour figures found the evidence irrefutable that Israel - and the philosophy of political Zionism upon which it was founded and sustained, - presented an undeniable ideological contradiction in terms of Labour's socialist principles. And while the media captions and images of Palestinians wielding sling-shots epitomised - with some irony - the exchange of the analogy of 'David' from Israel to the occupied, dispossessed and suppressed Palestinians of the Occupied Territories, Labour leaders and key figures retained the position that what Labour was essentially attempting to address was a situation generated by economic inequalities, not the political and legal injustices preventing Palestinian self-determination and perhaps statehood.

This position of denial based on the psychological aspects extended to the era of Tony Blair and New Labour. As an innate pragmatist in both internal and external affairs Blair was somewhat immune from the full influence of the *essential dilemma*. However, with the decline of Oslo and the Labor Party of Israel, and the political resurgence of the Palestinians after 1967 and even more so in the post-1973 period, the influence of the *essential dilemma* re-emerged to become an increasing influence upon individuals, groups and ultimately the party as a whole and its decision and policy-making mechanisms.

In the final analysis, and despite all the dissenting voices within the Parliamentary Labour Party, the constituencies, and even on the streets, the evidence remains that beneath the persona of an even-handedness captured in the language and the theoretical approach of the 'both sides' policy, under the influence of the psychological aspects of the *essential dilemma* Tony Blair's position remained largely unchanged, in that it is intuitively, - pro-Israel. Nowhere is this general underlying condition more adequately illustrated than in a speech he gave at the 2002 annual party conference.

Following the first anniversary of the 9/11 attack and the largest political demonstration in British history (motivated principally by a proposal to apply 'regime change' in Iraq), the growing unease among Labour figures at Blair's apparent reluctance to acknowledge a link between Middle Eastern and Islamic resentment towards the west arising from the double-standards, typified by the application of

sanctions upon Iraq but not Israel, were conveyed to the Labour leader in the 'Green Room' as he prepared to address the conference.⁹⁴⁸ In response Tony Blair incorporated the following sentence in an effort to allay the concerns and secure the support of conferences for Britain's role in the forthcoming 'War on Terror:'

'Some say the issue is Iraq. Some say it is the Middle East peace process. It's both. Some say it's poverty. Some say it's terrorism. It's both. And yes, what is happening in the Middle East now is ugly and wrong. The Palestinians living in increasingly abject conditions, humiliated and hopeless; Israeli civilians brutally murdered.'⁹⁴⁹

Blair continued as he develops where he sees a resolution to the conflict lies:

'I agree UN resolutions should apply here as much as to Iraq. But they don't just apply to Israel. They apply to all parties. And there is only one answer. By this year's end, we must have revived final-status negotiations and they must have explicitly as their aims: an Israeli state free from terror, recognised by the Arab world, and a viable Palestinian state based on the boundaries of 1967.'⁹⁵⁰

If nothing else it was another example of how the Palestinian aspect of the *essential dilemma*, which had plagued the Labour Party and its leaders since circa 1917, emerged yet again to generate internal concern and dissent at the highest levels of the leadership and the decision and policy-making forums. Coming nearly five years after

⁹⁴⁸ Apart from Iraq, the Labour delegates restlessness at the 2002 conference was further heightened by the ongoing destruction of Palestinian towns by Ariel Sharon (including the controversial April assault on the Jenin, West Bank refugee camp); John Kampfner says Blair was informed that if he wanted to secure support for the 'War on Terror' (an invasion of Iraq) he would need to acknowledge the perception of double-standards in the government's dealing with Israel in contrast to Iraq; in what Kampfner says was another 'sign of Blair's informal approach [to foreign affairs] which sent the Foreign Office into paroxysms of despair . . . a last minute paragraph was inserted in the Green Room by Jonathan Powell [Chief Political Aid], which wasn't even on the autocue.' Kampfner, John (05.12.2003: 8)

⁹⁴⁹ Blair, Tony (01.10.2002) *Speech: Labour Party Conference*, (Blackpool)

⁹⁵⁰ Ibid., (01.10.2002)

his inaugural speech as prime minister on the Israel-Palestinian conflict (December 1997), while Blair's public policy position remained as pragmatic as ever - enshrined in his 'both sides' analogy, - his inherent pro-Israel tendencies were just as prevalent, as David Mepham's assessment underlines: 'I do not think his basic instincts have changed very much.'⁹⁵¹ The conference address contained all the clichés and anomalies present in the 1997 statement: the 'both sides' analogy was now reflected in the 'all parties' terminology; the cause of the Palestinian resistance and predicament remains primarily one of economics, 'poverty;' and Israel remains the sole victim of terror, even though during the Second *Intifadah* (September 2000 - January 2005) some 950 Israelis were killed by Palestinians, and 3,223 Palestinians were killed by Israelis,⁹⁵² for Blair, it is only Israelis who are 'brutally murdered.' Although Blair says he agrees UN resolutions should apply 'here' [to Israel], the failure to use the explicit reference to Israel renders the reference evasively ambiguous. Furthermore, there is no firm commitment to ensure Israel's compliance with UN resolutions or international law via sanctions, or indeed, military intervention, as was being sought against Iraq at the time of the speech. Again, unlike Kosovo and Iraq, there is no clear statement of what the Labour government will undertake to implement the doctrine of humanitarian intervention and an ethical foreign policy in the Israel-Palestinian case. (Almost inevitably, there was no revival of the final-status negotiations, but Blair took Britain to war in Iraq.) That is the crucial difference: Tony Blair and New Labour, as a result of the *common origins* and the resulting *essential dilemma*, are inherently unable to apply the same principles to Israel as they have on numerous occasions elsewhere.

While it may be accepted in some quarters as a case of Tony Blair's 'informal approach' to foreign affairs, or as a further example of the ultra-pragmatist scripting the play to the bay of a disgruntled audience, the example can also be used as concluding evidence that in terms of his own and New Labour's relations with Israel, Blair still operated largely beyond the central premise that significant section of the

⁹⁵¹ Mepham, David (14.12.2005: 5)

⁹⁵² See: BBC News (Tuesday February 8, 2005) *Intifada Toll 2000-2005*, (c. September 29, 2000 - January 15, 2005). See: *B'Tselem*, Israel Human Rights Group, (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/3694350.stm)

Labour Party had now clearly adopted as a consensus: that as a prerequisite to addressing a core aspect of the *essential dilemma*, Labour must apply the same principles and actions to Israel as it does elsewhere; whether those principles be socialist, based on equality, or as an ethical dimension to foreign policy, and/or the doctrine of humanitarian intervention, or via the United Nations and international law. The 'last-minute' inclusion suggests that far from the paragraph being the result of a considered even-handed awareness based on the socialist ethical and humanitarian principles of the New Labour Party, it was in fact the result of last-minute addition, a hurried adjustments born of a pragmatist trying to reconcile the contradictions imposed by the consequence of the *common origins* and the *essential dilemma* in response to a neutralist consensus conveyed to the leadership from the floor of the conference. Once again however, the crucial psychological, ideological and political quandary for Blair stemming from both the conference floor and the *essential dilemma*, is, as the veteran left-wing figure Tony Benn reflects, that a specific rebuke of Israel is just too uncomfortable given the historical, modern and contemporary sympathies and affiliations in that 'It will be an admission of a mistake,' but, as Benn also says, and as this thesis asserts, 'that isn't so important as getting it right.'⁹⁵³

What Blair's speech and his position ultimately illustrates, is that some Labour MPs and related figures cannot operate beyond the parameters of the United Nations and international law because a succession of Labour leaders have shown that when it come to political Zionism and later the State of Israel, a great many of them are unable to completely resist the influence of the *common origins* and the *essential dilemma*. The evidence remains predominantly supportive of the primary assertion in this thesis, that, despite the decades of evidence to illustrate the inherent ideological contradiction posed by a socialist Labour Party's relations with political Zionism in the wake of the realities of both political Zionism and Palestine, relations have been maintained. They have not only been maintained, but are still prevalent and perfectly able to influence positions and policy even though such positions are contrary to almost every principle of New Labour. And regardless of New Labour's pledge to

⁹⁵³ Benn, Tony [Editor, Ruth Winstone] (2007: 277) *More Time for Politics: Diaries, 2001-2007*, Chapter 5, *More Time for Politics, Wednesday November 5, 2005*, (London: Hutchinson)

introduce an ethical dimension to foreign affairs and to apply the doctrine of humanitarian intervention, and despite the devastating consequences of Israel's occupation policies for the Palestinians, and the role of the Israeli Labor Party in formulating and applying those policies in violations of international law and UN resolutions, many Labour figures remain - as a result of the *common origins* and the psychological aspects - instinctively sympathetic and supportive of Israel, despite the ideological contradictions and the resulting *essential dilemma*. As a consequence the continuity of the *essential dilemma* was secured, as the *basis* and *nature* of the relationship between Labour and political Zionism remains principally the consequence of what the poet Rupert Brooke once termed, 'a richer dust concealed.'⁹⁵⁴

⁹⁵⁴ Brooke, Rupert (1936: 148) [*January, Eighth Impression*] *The Complete Poems of Rupert Brooke, 1914, V, The Soldier*, (London: Sidgwich & Jackson)

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