

The mini-state debate in light of the renewed Palestinian struggle

by Mark, Detroit

At the end of September, the Palestinian West Bank and Gaza were ablaze once again. Faced with one outrage after another by the Israeli government of Netanyahu, the Palestinian masses arose in protest. Israeli troops replied in their usual way, with murderous repression. Israeli helicopter gun-ships fired point blank on Palestinian crowds. So brutal were the Israeli troops that even some of the police of Arafat's mini-state government, in defiance of their top officers, ignored their usual duty to keep down militant protests of the Palestinian masses and turned their guns on the rampaging Israeli troops.

Below we reprint an article I wrote on the situation facing the Palestinian struggle which originally was published in February 1995. It was part of a series of exchanges on this subject with Jason of the misnamed Revolutionary Socialist Study Group in Seattle. Jason, who had formerly written poems in support of the *intifadeh*, was so excited by the prospect of a mini-state that he decided that the PLO-Israeli peace accords showed that past ideas about the reactionary nature of zionism and imperialism were wrong. He said he was challenging the MLP's "long-held assumptions about international aid, as well as the role of zionism" as well as "certain theoretical assumptions about the role of imperialism." These exchanges were part of a wide-ranging polemic that took place between former members and supporters of the Marxist-Leninist Party in the wake of this party's collapse at the end of 1993. Jason was part of a the ex-MLP trend that generally prettified imperialism and had lost faith in the revolutionary class struggle. I was among those who wanted to maintain a revolutionary critique of imperialism and Israeli capitalism characteristic of the former MLP.

Although the article is not an up to date account of the Palestinian-Israeli situation, it touches on a number of important issues that must be grappled with by those who want to support the cause of the Palestinian masses. What was the significance of the Israeli-PLO peace accords and the setting up of the mini-state Palestinian National Authority (PNA)? What is the class nature and role of the Islamic fundamentalists? Did Israel's recognition of the mini-state authority portend wonderful economic development via Israeli capital and world imperialist investment and aid? Would the Israeli ruling class

become peace-loving? As for the Palestinian struggle, what were it's general tasks and goals in light of the creation of the Palestinian National Authority? Is revolutionary class organization needed independent of the PLO and Hamas or should the toilers place their faith in such forces?

The PLO-Israeli peace accords and the creation of the Palestinian mini-state, the Palestinian National Authority, did bring certain changes. Israel retreated from the military occupation of certain of the Palestinian territories. And the new situation affected revolutionary strategy as well. With the Palestinian bourgeoisie coming to power in the PNA, the class issues that always existed in the Palestinian struggle came more to the fore, and with this, the need for revolutionary class organization.

But when the article was written over a year-and-a-half ago, events were already shattering the myths promoted by Jason. Already it was clear that the his prediction of glorious progress coming through the PNA in collaboration with an allegedly peace-loving Israel and a benevolent imperialism was nonsense. Far from the panacea promoted by Jason, the peace accords meant that in exchange for limited control over part of the Palestinian territories formerly under direct Israeli military occupation, the PLO essentially agreed to be Israel's junior partner in quelling the uprisings of the Palestinian masses. The toilers remained subjugated and poverty stricken. Israeli troops continued to put down the masses who were not satisfied with the deal and the new Palestinian police helped them. Meanwhile, the promise of abundant aid and economic relief proved hollow.

Now the right-wing government of Netanyahu has taken over in Israel. Even though the peace accords limit the Palestinian authority to the status of a bantustan, Netanyahu thinks that Israel made too many concessions, and he says that he will never agree to a Palestinian state. Thus his government has reneged on various deals made by Israel previously. For example, they have refused to remove Israeli troops from the city of Hebron. As well, they are going ahead with a project originally proposed, but then postponed, by the previous Labor government to build major highways to facilitate more Israeli settlements on Palestinian lands in the West Bank. Meanwhile the restrictions on Palestinian travel between the Palestinian areas and into Israel remain tight. Among other things, this has made it impossible for many Palestinians employed inside Israel to work and intensified the impoverishment in the Palestinian areas. Netanyahu's decision to open the new tunnel entrance by the Moslem holy places was of little consequence in itself. But it symbolized the new Israeli government's naked contempt for the Arab population of Jerusalem and elsewhere.

Netanyahu's stance has not only antagonized the Palestinian masses but also aggravated the relations between Israel and the PNA. Does this mean that the class differences among the

¹ My article was circulated on e-mail to the various interested parties as Detroit #72, Jan. 17, 1995. It first appeared in print in the *Chicago Workers' Voice Theoretical Journal* #6, February 10, 1995. Earlier exchanges between Jason and me on this subject also circulated on e-mail and then appeared in the *CWVTJ* #3, June 1, 1994 and the *CWVTJ* #5, December 1, 1994.

Palestinians will fade away so long as the peace accords are in doubt? Not at all. No matter how sharp the contradiction between Netanyahu and the PNA may become, different classes among the Palestinians will continue to have different interests, and there may be sharp clashes among them. Through the stormy times ahead, Arafat will continue to seek a return to wheeling and dealing with the Israeli oppressors, and he will try to keep the masses in line and channel any struggle that breaks out into pressure to help the Palestinian bourgeoisie reach its deals with zionism and the major capitalist powers. Hamas

wants to impose an Islamic fundamentalist straitjacket on the Palestinians to replace the Israeli yoke. And the masses want freedom and a struggle for the improvement of their condition, but there is no organized force that stands up for these interests of the Palestinian workers and poor.

The events since the article below was written confirm its conclusions about the nature of Israel, imperialism, and the PLO-Israeli peace accords. They offer more proof of the need for a revolutionary class orientation for the Palestinian masses. □

From the debate on the Palestinian mini-state

Reformist panaceas crash on the rocks of reality

The following article was first circulated on e-mail on Jan. 17, 1995 as Detroit #72 with the subtitle "On Jason's 'Seattle #75'" in place of the subtitle on the debate on the mini-state. It first appeared in print in the *Chicago Workers' Voice Theoretical Journal* #6 (Feb. 10, 1995).

by Mark, Detroit

In May of 1994, Jason put forward views on the Palestinian-Israeli situation in which he stated his desire to challenge "certain long-held assumptions about international aid, as well as the role of zionism, which are, in my eyes at least, being proved suspect through the development of the current situation in Israel and Palestine." In line with his "new" ideas, Jason concocted an elaborate scheme for the development of the newly-created Palestinian "mini-state" whereby the Israeli zionist bourgeoisie and international imperialism would bring the good life to the Palestinian masses. He even tried to show how the Israeli settlements, based on the robbery of Palestinian land and resources in the West Bank and Gaza, were really a god-send for the Palestinians. In June, Jason further elaborated his theories, arguing that Israel would become peace-loving because "to have a huge military regime" and to "be a modern state" were "two mutually exclusive types of state(s)."

It's been over eight months since Jason began to release his views. The tumultuous events in the mini-state and the occupied territories over this time have been a test for Jason's theories. Do they demonstrate the validity of his reformist analysis, of his opposition to a revolutionary critique of Israel, imperialism and the Israeli-PLO accords? Do they show the Palestinian toilers should put their faith in their long-time oppressors and their new junior partners running the mini-state? Or do they show, as Jason's revolutionary critics have been pointing out, that the class issues have assumed ever-more importance in the

Palestinian struggle?

How have Jason's theories stacked up? Have the international financiers poured in money to uplift the poor? No. Most of the aid has been held up.

Has Israel become the helpful "good neighbor"? No. The robbery of Palestinian land continues with new settlements. The zionist authorities have periodically cut off Palestinian workers from their jobs in Israel. Unemployment and poverty are growing worse.

And what of the promises of peace? Israeli police continue to gun down Palestinian protesters with impunity. Not to be outdone, the Palestinian authority police have attempted to curtail protest against Israel, leading to the horrendous massacre of demonstrators in Gaza in November. And just to let the Palestinian police know who's still the big boss, Israeli police recently opened fire on Palestinian police. Jason's daydreaming about the new nature of imperialism and zionism has shown itself to be an unremitting nightmare.

Jason continues to run from reality

Jason always boasts that his views are based on "reality" while his opponents are just empty-headed phrasemongers. So let's see how he reacts to *this* dose of reality. In his December 29, 1994 article, Jason admits that all sorts of terrible things are going on, that there is a "slow strangulation of the PNA (Palestinian National Authority)," etc. But does this give him the slightest pause about his previous assertions about the wonderful things that would come about from imperialism and zionism? Not on your life.

Jason reasons that "despite such a bleak picture, certain favorable conditions exist. One is that international aid, as it was originally planned, was both relatively generous, and without many of the usual strings of austerity these institutions normally include as conditions of aid. The amounts that were announced were actually about as much as the territories were

capable of absorbing." What touching faith in the imperialist financiers! Why they want to shower all the riches on the Palestinians that they could possibly use. Better hold some up or there will be too many jobs, too high wages, too many schools, too much housing!

The other "favorable condition" according to Jason is "Israel is interested in investing in the West Bank." Jason admits that "such investment would obviously be advanced for the purposes of allowing the Israeli bourgeoisie to advance their interests". But for Jason, what's good for the Zionist occupiers is good for the Palestinian masses. He ignores that Israel's interests are for the mini-state to be a tiny, slave-wage sweatshop, not some kind of economic wonder for the Palestinians. Through Jason's rose-colored glasses, however, all he can see is a wondrous world of "increased employment," "the long-term building of a Palestinian industrial/agricultural base" and how "advantageous for the Palestinians as a whole" Israeli investment will be.

Now let's come down from Jason's fantasy world and get another picture of what Israeli development of the occupied territories has historically been like. One author describes this development as "choking off development in the Territories so as to provide both a captive market for Israeli goods and a cheap labor force." Who penned such an unflattering picture? Jason — in the very same December 29 document promoting the wonders of development hand-in-hand with Israel! Indeed, Israel has been promoting development in their own interests in the occupied Palestinian lands for a long time. And if we judge things by the last several decades of actual historical *reality*, and not Jason's fantasies, it is not a pretty sight. Israeli development has largely consisted of robbing the land and resources of the Palestinians to create Israeli settlements. It has consisted of wanton plunder, backed up by the iron fist of the Israeli armed forces and the paramilitary settlers.

Jason won't contest the past "choking" or the present "strangulation." The only problem is he never learns anything from it. Instead he paints smiley faces on the stranglers and tells us don't worry, they'll be good boys in the future. And so his admission of the ruinous consequences of past Israeli development has not dissuaded him from becoming an apologist for the Israeli settlements. In his December 29 article he once again tells us that only "military" settlements must go, and this is "a small minority of the settlers overall." Of course, the idea that the rest of the settlements are detached from Israeli militarism is a farce for they owe their origin and continued existence to the Israeli armed forces and the paramilitary settlements.

Why, according to Jason, when Israel does bad things, that has nothing to do with the real interests of the Zionist bourgeoisie. He imagines that good deeds for the Palestinian toilers are really in the interests of these career criminals. Thus he considers that when Israel is exerting economic pressure and pressing Arafat to crackdown on the masses it means Israel "is shooting itself in the foot." And he advises the Zionist rulers that they "cannot allow the situation to continue without an increase in attacks on Israel." Yes Jason, Israel must be peaceful or those nasty Palestinians will be attacking it. I'm

sure the Israeli generals will beat their swords into plowshares any day now.

Neither the entire history of Israeli domination over the Palestinian masses nor the present-day events have any real bearing on Jason's conclusions about imperialism and Zionism. He has decided that it's inevitable that they are forces for good and no amount of facts will get in the way. Jason's "realism" simply consists of adjusting himself to the basic status quo, of glorifying oppression.

Minor tinkering instead of real change

This sort of "realism" is reflected in Jason's proposed solution to the present debacle in the Palestinian mini-state and the rest of the occupied territories. According to Jason, "there is no point in spending time complaining that they (the Israel-PLO accords — Mk) are stacked in Israel's favor" because they are "a fact." This is typical of Jason's general approach to the world. Once he declares something a fact, then there is no point in trying to significantly change things. Just go with the flow. Since the accords exist, they must be accepted. And since they must be accepted, Jason's plan does not go beyond some minor tinkering with the admittedly rotten deal and pretending this will lead to some glorious results.

For example, Jason plays up his alleged concern for "democratization of the PNA." He complains bitterly about how undemocratic Arafat's administration is. But with his "realistic" politics, what does this amount to? His first idea on "democratization" is to keep the Arafat administration in power! As Jason puts it: "From a tactical angle, it is difficult to simply demand their ouster, as this will not be accomplished short of a violent civil war." In other words, since the PNA will not peacefully step down, then there is no alternative but to accept its dictatorship. Jason says the Arafat cabal has "all the political instincts of the Czar." But Arafat's Czarist instincts are enough to cow down Jason.

But wait! Jason can fix things. All you have to do is "advance the slogan that other forces, of which there are many of a secular nature, be appointed to the government. Some of these will be better accountable to the masses." Now here's an exciting prospect for democracy. Take a Czarist regime and add a few slightly less repressive (well, some of them anyway) people and voilà, we have the "democratization of the PNA". Not only that. "It will also allow the *Intifada* to increase its ability to press the PNA to take specific stands vs. other actors, such as the Israelis." Only in Jason's dream world can you have a government that agrees to collaborate with Israeli oppression and, at the same time, helps advance the struggle against itself and the Zionist ruling class. No wonder Jason is unable to tell us who these "other forces" are who can accomplish such miracles!

Jason's describes his other path to democracy: "local elections insure accountability on day-to-day issues that no other process will at this time." Of course, there should be local elections. And it's possible that some more competent local bureaucrats get elected. But the real power will still reside with Czar Arafat. The national administration will be the ones

involved in deciding overall development plans and financing, relations with Israel, negotiations of water rights, control the mini-state army, etc. The local bureaucrats will only operate within these parameters. So the basic miserable situation faced by the Palestinian masses will remain. The national authority will exercise its dictate in collaboration with Israel. Economic deprivation will still be rampant. Democracy will remain quite limited.

If Jason wants some real “accountability,” he should concentrate on building up a powerful struggle against the mini-state authority, not grovel before it. A democratic electoral system should certainly be a part of such a movement’s demands. Such a system could increase the masses’ ability to participate in political life and could provide a forum for parties representing the interests of the toilers. But elections can only be an adjunct to building the mass struggle, not replace its necessity.

Obscuring the class nature of the Islamic fundamentalists

Another issue with the elections is what happens if the Islamic fundamentalists come to power? Since Jason considers defense of the mini-state authority to be paramount, he does not call for a struggle to bring down even an Islamic rule. Instead he whistles past the graveyard. He doubts that Palestinians will “freely hand them (their rights — Mk) over to religious fanatics given a democratic choice where they are only one of several options” because “that sort of thing flourishes best amongst a poorly educated people with no democratic traditions and little political sophistication.” Of course the liberals of Germany said the same thing about Hitler coming to power. Meanwhile, Jason himself claims that Hamas’ policies have “endeared them to a section of the Palestinian masses” and their ideology “has a powerful appeal.”

And while Jason doubts Palestinians would elect Hamas, he does his best to prettify them. He gets upset with me for pointing out that “Hamas represents the Islamic fundamentalist section of the bourgeoisie and would like, for now at least, a share of the power and privileges the PLO has.” He says this is an attempt to “reduce Hamas’ motivations down to that of a venal, corrupt bourgeoisie strata” and doesn’t recognize that most of Hamas’ flaws are “ideological.” Well, I hadn’t talked about how “venal” or “corrupt” Hamas was. It is Jason who tries to make the degree of corruptness the central issue. This allows him to dodge the question of what class interests the Islamic fundamentalist organizations represent. In fact, he points with pride how his analysis contradicts the idea of “class issues primary, everything else secondary.” Jason thinks the main issue is whether the personal motivation of some Islamic fundamentalist leader is to amass a fortune, not that Hamas represents one section of bourgeois class tyranny trying to displace the present bourgeois regime. And by obscuring the class nature of Hamas, Jason winds up portraying the program of Hamas as little more than spiritual contemplation and kindly charity work.

The way Jason looks at things, Hamas’ ideological concerns

mean it won’t defend the capitalist order whereas in reality an Islamic regime will mean the most backward and suffocating sort of capitalist order. If the religious fanaticism of Hamas means they are not advancing a political agenda, then I suppose the Pope and the anti-abortion zealots have no political agenda either.

He is also quite enamored by the “network of social service organizations” of the Islamic fundamentalists for their “concrete support for Palestinians.” Jason considers this evidence that Hamas is not corrupt and that which class interests it represents is a minor concern. Yes, some of the inadequate international relief aid goes through Hamas. But reactionaries have often used similar aid programs to buy a little good will while supporting social orders of extreme oppression. Indeed, Jason himself noted the narrow political infighting among all the groups distributing aid in his May 10 document. There he states that “charity operations are seen as the territory of one particular faction,” for example, “administrators are pressured to hire workers of one particular group” and “control over limited resources is becoming more important than what uses are made of the resources.” Doesn’t sound like mere disinterested charity, does it? But for Jason, the main thing is that Hamas doesn’t have as many luxury cars as Arafat’s cronies.

Jason’s distorted view of class analysis

By detaching their ideological “flaws” from their class basis, Jason assists Hamas in presenting itself as an organization of the downtrodden. He just scoffs at the class analysis of Hamas as “class reductionism.” For Jason, there are just a lot of different oppressions that “operate simultaneously and in a totally intertwined manner.” But he avoids the fact that the root cause of all these forms of oppression are various class interests and that different class interests are the underlying cause of different trends within each form of struggle against oppression. Hence when Jason hears about class analysis being applied to, say, national oppression or women’s oppression, he can only imagine it to mean obliterating all distinctions between various forms of oppression, of reducing things to absurdity.

In fact in his June article, Jason says flat out that he considers Marxism an inadequate tool for analysis, arguing that it is “only one of many useful tools when looking at non-class (race and gender) questions” and is a “dismal failure” “on questions dealing with an individual’s spiritual needs.” Of course since Jason classifies radical Islamic fundamentalism as basically “cultural oppression,” it is no wonder he considers pointing out the class nature of Hamas to be a dismal failure, as “not the way to examine the threat they pose.” Marx was well known for pointing out the underlying basis of religious conflicts in Europe several centuries ago was the clash between rising capitalism and the old feudal order. But Jason, who assures the world it is the stand of his opponents that “actually misses the essence of the way Marx used dialectical and historical materialism,” can dismiss class interests by referring to religious motivations.

A theory for restricting the struggle

As we have seen, no matter how much the Palestine mini-state authority cracks down on the masses, Jason supports it, albeit with a cosmetic face-lift. Yet, at the same time, Jason wants to pose as the greatest proponent of the struggle of the toilers. Indeed he fumes at anyone who would suggest that his views would encourage the masses to “wait passively for things to change”. Now why would someone get that idea, Jason? Just because you promoted a glorious picture of Palestinian development under Israeli domination or continue to tout the alleged generosity of the international financiers? Or maybe it was your discovery of the new economic law that will lead to a peaceful Israel? If imperialism and Israel are as wonderful as Jason portrays them, any sensible person would see no point in fighting them.

But perhaps we have been unfair to Jason. After all, in Section 3, point #2 of his December article, Jason has a list of all sorts of struggles and declares that they are “all absolutely essential to wage simultaneously.” But it’s all for show as one struggle after another is sacrificed on the alter of his “statehood framework.” Let’s see how each of the five struggles he lists is rendered impotent by this framework.

Number “5.” is “the Palestinians vs. international donors, e.g. the IMF, and the Palestinians vs. Arab capital.” Jason says these struggles must be placed “on the ‘back burner’.” Presumably you mustn’t do anything to jeopardize all the great riches about to be showered on the mini-state. And too many workers’ struggles and social demands makes for a bad investment climate.

Struggle number “2.” is “the Palestinians vs. the Palestinian National Authority, as it is presently constructed.” With the proviso “as it is presently constructed” Jason’s fight against the PNA is reduced to schemes to *maintain* the repressive authority like Jason’s idea to add a few appointees to it.

Moving along. Struggle number “3.” is “the Palestinian toilers vs. the Palestinian bourgeoisie.” So you can fight the bourgeoisie but not have a serious struggle against the bourgeois mini-state authority. But what of the development plans of the mini-state? Doesn’t supporting the mini-state require seeing that its development plans succeed? Won’t the Palestinian authority consider a militant workers’ movement a threat to its efforts to develop capitalism? In his May document Jason himself worries that the workers demands must be limited by the demands of capitalist development. He states he is for “a progressive stand toward Palestinian workers while understanding the need for the capitalist development of the economy, etc.” Whatever Jason thinks the above phrase means, it will be the opinion of the exploiters that counts. And it is highly likely that the exploiters and their state authority will consider most any worker demand that cuts into their profits as adversely affecting capitalist development. Moreover, it is hard to believe that Jason can be for much of a fight against the Palestinian capitalists when he has put the struggle against foreign capital on the “back burner” and when he is excited about the combining of foreign capital (Israeli included) and the Palestinian economy.

Struggle number “4.” is “the secular Palestinians vs. the Islamic fundamentalist Palestinians.” Presumably, this is a call to oppose Islamic fundamentalism, although Jason isn’t even quite sure of his attitude towards an Islamic state in Palestine. However, Jason is upset that anyone would call Hamas a bourgeois force. But criticism of religion stripped from its class basis cripples the ability of the critique to have appeal among the masses.

Finally, there is struggle number “1.”: “the Palestinians vs. the Israeli occupation.” Jason prides himself on his support for the *intifada*. But he also has given his blessings to the PLO-Israeli accords, part of which was agreement to clamp down on anti-Israeli protest. If he is really serious about building up the PLO mini-state authority, then he must agree to keeping the *intifada* in line.

Moreover, Jason has already ruled out the struggle against the vast bulk of Israeli robbery of land and resources. Only military outposts are bad, he says. But while Israeli settlers are allowed to make themselves at home, Jason does not support the right of repatriation for those Palestinians who lost their homes, land and livelihood to Israeli terror. When it comes to Palestinians living in exile outside the occupied territories, he proclaims “there is simply no place for that many people.” What next? Perhaps Jason will advise the black South Africans dispossessed of their farms and villages under the old apartheid system to give up their demands to get their land back. After all, don’t the rich white farmers promote development? Aren’t they mainly economic farms, not military farms?

After his list of struggles, Jason tells us “although it is necessary to talk about the individual struggles separately, nonetheless any strategy must be able to incorporate the different currents of struggle under an overall framework. My view is that that framework is the drive for Palestinian statehood.” Let’s all work for statehood, Jason says. But what state are we talking about? Are we talking about the tiny bantustan which has been granted the right of playing rent-a-cop for Israel? The state that lacks the normal sovereign rights of states? The state based on a deal that is an embarrassment even to the likes of Edward Said, a major figure of PLO national reformist politics? This is the state that Jason, despite his complaints against Arafat, is backing.

And what does it mean to incorporate all the separate struggles against oppression under this overall framework? Let’s sum up what became of all the separate struggles. One is basically a call to save the repressive state with tinkering, one is on the “back burner” and the other three are supported in theory and undermined in practice. When it comes to struggle, Jason giveth and Jason taketh away. This is the great new theory Jason arrived at by replacing the class framework for examining the Palestinian struggle with his statehood framework. This is a new theory that winds up with the same basic features of the tired old theories of bourgeois nationalism.

Jason on organization

Besides the great new theory of anti-struggle, Jason offers some advice on how the Palestinian masses should organize. In

Section 3, point 2c, he describes what he considers to be the problems that beset the organization of the *intifada*. At first, there were locally run groups that were “ad-hoc coalitions” based on “cooperation between factions.” The *intifada* suffered though when leaders from outside began to issue orders to local leaders who “began to be recruited and controlled by different factions.” Jason demands “returning of control to activists at the base.” That’s a good sentiment. But since Jason avoids any analysis of the politics of the local or outside forces, his criticism amounts to railing against organized trends and “outsiders” in general. If Jason thinks the answer is returning to the days before the growth of political trends in the movement, then he is talking about the impossible. Mass movements of any significant duration are bound to give rise to political trends and clashes between them. And longing for a past where politics was supposedly unimportant will not solve anything.

Or maybe Jason is talking about “reinvigoration” of the movement by taking up his conception of struggle within the statehood framework. That should put the clamps on any motion in short order!

But there is a way that really will help revive the movement. That is the path of working to build up a trend representing the interests of the masses, a class trend distinct from, and in opposition to, the politics of the PLO and the Islamic groups. Only when the masses embark upon the path of establishing their own politics and organization will they be able to control their own destiny and make possible the reinvigoration of the base.

Mocking class organization

But every time Jason hears the notion of class organization he gets hysterical. In his December 29 document, for example, he mocks the concept as “blood-curdling threats to destroy Israel.” And his articles keep up a steady drumbeat that my problem is that I don’t realize Israel is not about to be overthrown soon, that it is not time to “storm the Knesset”², etc. For Jason it is inconceivable that revolutionary organizing can and should take place even though the day of the overthrow of the Zionist state is not at hand. The need for revolutionary organizing to move forward the battles of today while making the toilers conscious of the goals that are *not immediately* realizable is foreign to him. For Jason, there is either “storming the Knesset” or ridiculing the present-day tasks necessary to eventually achieve the grander goals like the overthrow of the Zionist rulers. And this outlook has led Jason to abandon a revolutionary perspective for “realizable” pipedreams about the good life via the powers-that-be.

In order to hide the fact that my call for revolutionary organizing is not based on illusions about the difficulties of struggle in this period, Jason hides my analysis of the difficulties. For instance, when Jason lists my quotes on the value of class organization from (from pages 8-9 of the *CWVTJ*

of June 1, 1994) he somehow omits the following lines from right in the midst of those quotes: “None of these tasks are easy. They buck the present dominant political trends. As well, the death and destruction caused by Israel has exacted a heavy toll on the Palestinian toilers. The days of sweeping victories in organizing and winning the big demands are not just around the corner.” The next line Jason quotes: “But embarking upon the path of class organization is the only way the Palestinian cause will move ahead.” Doing revolutionary work in difficult times is what Jason deems empty “blood-curdling threats to destroy Israel.”

Jason declares Marxism-Leninism irrelevant

A particular focus of Jason’s attack on class organization is his scoffing at the thought that Marxism-Leninism can have influence among Palestinians. He terms the chances of this “simply non-existent.” His first argument is that “the theory itself is in crisis”. What this crisis consists of, Jason doesn’t bother to tell us. But in his writings Jason consistently denounces the most basic Marxist precepts or attacks his fanciful distortions of them.

Examples of the former include his Seattle #65 where he denounces the “paradigm of revolution” including such “set-in-cement postulates” as “it (revolution — Mk) was inevitable” or that “its motive force was the working class”. Well, there is nothing left of Marxism without the idea that the working class will be the gravediggers of capitalism and establish socialism.

For one of the endless examples of the fanciful distortions, see how Jason distorts the Marxist idea of supporting the goal of socialism and seeing other revolutions as clearing the grounds for socialism into the idea that only if other revolutions turn into socialist revolutions, should they be supported. (Seattle #65, the same section on the “paradigm of revolution”.) Or see how Jason converts Marx into an apologist for neo-conservative economics (discussed in my September 27 reply to Jason contained in the *CWVTJ* #5, p.24).

So Jason’s first argument of why Marxism-Leninist influence is not possible is essentially that you should be against Marxist influence.

Jason’s second argument is that before a Marxist-Leninist party can exist, “there would have to be a group or trend of radical intellectuals headed in that direction.” Here once again, Jason the “Marxist” simply caves in to the status quo. Under the banner that Israel is not going to be quickly overthrown, he scoffs at revolutionary organizing to eventually achieve that goal. Now, under the banner that a mass Marxist party is not around the corner, he thinks there is no point in working toward that goal. For Jason, it’s fine to advocate Marxism when there’s a big crowd around applauding. Else it’s time to tuck your ideals away and seek sanctuary in painting lovely pictures of what life could be like under the present oppression. For Jason, it is enough to shout “the theory itself is in crisis” and declare the possibilities for Marxism-Leninism over. But if one is a Marxist, as Jason pretends to be, then the crisis means that there will be a debate about what comprises a revolutionary ideology, what Marxism really is, and how the Marxist

²Israeli parliament — CV.

principles apply in the present conditions.

Are there conditions present that will motivate the Palestinian masses to search for a theory of the revolutionary class struggle? Jason claims those supporting the building of class organization have views that are “not a creation of an actual analysis,” show “little connection to the on-going situation” and are just “phrasemongering.” But one would have to have their eyes shut tight to not see the general conditions that are laying the basis for the influence of an ideology that can guide the revolutionary class struggle. We have been arguing that the deal between the Palestinian bourgeoisie and Israel to set up a repressive mini-state would mean that the class struggle would come more to the fore. We have pointed out that large sections of the masses want to continue the struggle against Israeli oppression against the wishes of the bourgeois mini-state authority. We have called attention to the class nature of the struggle against poverty in the occupied

territories. We have spoken of the extreme exploitation of the masses that would remain, even if the mini-state stabilizes, and how the masses would have to fight against this. Meanwhile, even Jason acknowledges that activists at the base are getting fed up with established groups and that there is a need for a theory of struggle that is an alternative to the established trends (although Jason’s statehood framework theory is hardly an alternative).

No one can say in advance how fast Marxism will take hold as a mass trend. But clearly the present situation in the Palestinian struggle puts the question of revolutionary theory on the agenda. If one can only see the present dominance of other trends, then inevitably there will be despair over revolutionary theory and collapse into reformism. But if one opens their eyes to the entire reality, then one can also see how the present conditions are creating opportunities for Marxist influence. □