

from among the landless peasants in the Jenin area and from the destitute labourers of the shanties on the outskirts of Haifa (Alush, 1967:102). The class character of the Qassamites put them clearly outside the reaches of the factional system. More importantly al-Qassam himself came into open conflict with leadership of the Arab Committee on several occasions (Tuma, 1973:225; Alush, ibid.). Altogether the armed followers of al-Qassam did not exceed 200 in his lifetime (Alush, 1967:103), but the exemplary conduct of the Qassamites after their leader's death at the hand of the British exposed the vacillations of the factional leaders and temporarily took the initiative from their hands.

Case Two is the PKP and the League for National Liberation during the 1940s. Both constituted the Arab and Jewish sections of Palestinian communism. Here it was the national conflict rather than factionalism which prevented them from making inroads into the Arab working class. Palestinian communists however, succeeded in forging an alliance with the left wing of the nationalist movement under the leadership of Hamdi al-Husseini, of the Istiqlal party (Alush, 1967: 84; Beinen, 1977:9), and when the Arab Higher Committee collapsed after the defeat of the Revolt in 1939 the PKP became the only organized party in the Arab Community until 1946, when factional politics re-emerged (Beinen, 1977: 13).

As a general rule it may be said that when the communists of Palestine organized along class lines (which in practice meant along bi-national lines, such as in the 1920's and 1940's) they were marginalised by the nationalist movement. When, on the other hand, they became an active contingent within the nationalist movement (1935, and 1936 when the party joined the coordinating military committee of the revolt) they were submerged by the factional leadership. Nevertheless, the Palestinian working class succeeded in retaining a certain degree of autonomy from factional politics. The two main Palestinian