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Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims

EDWARD W. SAID

All rulers are the heirs of those who conquered before them. Hence, empathy with the victor invariably benefits the ruler. Historical materialists know what that means.

Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History"

The starting point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is "knowing thyself" as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory. It is important therefore to make an inventory.

Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*

I

Because the pages that follow are part of a larger work called *The Question of Palestine*, and because also these pages necessarily scant important issues that inform the Palestinian-Zionist encounter, it seems worthwhile therefore to supplement what follows with a series of introductory comments.

Until roughly the last thirty years of the nineteenth century everything to the east of an imaginary line drawn somewhere between Greece and Turkey was called the Orient. As a designation made in Europe the "Orient" for many centuries represented a special mentality, as in the phrase "the Oriental mind," also a set of special cultural, political, and even racial characteristics (in such notions as the Oriental despot, Oriental sensuality, splendor, inscrutability). But mainly the Orient represented a kind of indiscriminate generality for Europe associated not only with difference and otherness but with the vast spaces, the undifferentiated masses of mostly colored people, and the romance, exotic locales, mystery of "the marvels of the East." Anyone familiar with the political history of the late Victorian period, however, will know that the vexing, mostly political "Eastern

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Question” as it was called tended then to replace “the Orient” as a subject of concern. By the end of World War One it is estimated that European powers were in colonial occupation of a huge segment of the globe, of which a large slice belonged to the regions formerly known simply as *Oriental*. The romance of the Orient was thus succeeded by the problems of dealing with the Orient, first in competition with other European powers maneuvering there, second with the colonial people themselves in their struggles for independence. From being a place “out there” the Orient became a place of extraordinarily urgent and precise detail, a place of numerous sub-divisions. One of these, the Middle East, survives today as a region of the Orient connoting infinite complexities, problems, conflicts. At its center stands the question of Palestine.

Palestine has always played a special role in the imagination and in the political will of the West, which is where by common agreement modern Zionism also originated. Palestine is a place of causes and pilgrimages. It was the prize of the Crusades, as well as a place whose very name (and the endless historical naming and re-naming of the place) has been an issue of doctrinal importance. To call the place “Palestine” and not “Israel” or “Zion” is already an act of fairly consequential political interpretation. This in part explains the insistence in much pro-Zionist writing on the dubious assertion that “*Palestine*” was used only as an administrative designation in the Roman Empire, and never since, except of course during the British Mandate period after 1922. The point there has been to show that *Palestine* too is also an interpretation, one with much less continuity and prestige than *Israel*. But here we see an instance of interpretive mischief, using a future or past dream to obliterate the realities lying between past and future. The truth is of course that if one were to read geographers, historians, philosophers, poets who wrote in Arabic from the ninth century on, one would find innumerable references to Palestine;¹ to say nothing of innumerable references to Palestine in European literature from the Middle Ages to the present. The point may be a small one, but it serves to show how epistemologically the name of, and of course the very presence of bodies in, Palestine are—because Palestine carries so heavy an imaginative and doctrinal freight—transmuted from a reality into a non-reality, from a presence into an absence. My more important point is that so far as the Arab Palestinian is concerned, the Zionist project for and conquest of Palestine was simply the most successful and to date the most protracted of many such European projects since the Middle Ages. I say this as a relatively simple historical statement, without at this stage wishing to say anything about the comparative intrinsic merit of Zionism against the earlier projects.

In this century of course Palestine *was* “rebuilt,” it *was* “reconstituted,” it *was* “reestablished” as the state of Israel in 1948. Just how brutal these acts were is indicated, I think, in these remarks by Moshe Dayan in April 1969:

We came to this country which was already populated by Arabs, and we are establishing a Hebrew, that is a Jewish state here. In considerable areas of the country [the total area was about 6%] we bought the lands from the Arabs. Jewish villages were built in the place of Arab villages. You do not even know the names of these Arab villages, and I don't blame you, because these geography books no longer exist; not only do the books not exist, the Arab villages are not there either. Nahalal [Dayan's own village] arose in the place of Mahalul, Gevat—in the place of Jibta, (Kibbutz) Sarid—in the place of Haneifs, and Kefar Yehoshua—in the place of Tell Shaman. There is not one place built in this country that did not have a former Arab population. . . .²

¹ See A.L. Tibawi, *Anglo-Arab Relations and the Question of Palestine, 1914–1921* (London: Luzac, 1977), Chapter 1, “Palestine in History,” pp. 1–33, for a good account of Arab Palestine through the ages.

² *Ha'Aretz*, April 4, 1969.

Even Dayan's terminology, frank as it is, is euphemistic. For what he means by "the Arab villages are not there either" is that they were destroyed systematically, so much so that Professor Israel Shahak, who reckons almost four hundred villages (out of a total of 508) were thus eliminated, has said that these villages were "destroyed *completely*, with their houses, garden-walls, and even cemeteries and tombstones, so that literally a stone does not remain standing, and visitors are passing and being told that 'it was all desert'".³ There is some unpleasant congruity to the fact that after the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in 1967 the same policy of destruction was carried out there; by the end of 1969 7,554 Arab houses were razed, and by August 1971, 16,212 houses had been demolished.⁴ Nor was this all. According to the most precise calculations yet done, approximately 780,000 Arab Palestinians were dispossessed and displaced in 1948 in order to facilitate the "reconstruction and rebuilding" of Palestine.⁵ These are the Palestinian refugees, who now number well over 2 million. And finally we should add that the quantity of Arabs now held inside the Occupied Territories (which Menachem Begin claims to have "liberated") is 1.7 million; there are also well over half a million Arabs who live in pre-1967 Israel. The transformation of Palestine which resulted in Israel has been an extraordinarily expensive project—especially for the Arab Palestinians.

All the transformative projects for Palestine, including Zionism naturally, have rationalized the eradication of present reality in Palestine with some argument about a "higher" (or better, more worthy, more modern, more fitting; the comparatives are almost infinite) interest, cause, or mission. These "higher" things entitle their proponents not only to claim that the natives of Palestine such as they are, are not worth considering and therefore non-existent but also to claim that the natives of Palestine, and Palestine itself, have been superseded definitively, transformed completely and beyond recall, and this even while those same natives have been demonstrating exactly the opposite. Put in plain language this is what I mean: when Israel came into existence in 1948 Jews owned about 6% of the land of Palestine; Arabs constituted well over 65% of the population; Jews were for the most part Europeans who had begun coming to colonize Palestine as Europeans since the 1880's. During the 1947-8 War Zionists conquered the rest of Palestine and drove out most of its inhabitants, a feat unparalleled in the history of settler colonialism (except for the conquest of Tasmania).

During the years since 1917 the Arab Palestinian has been pitted against an undeniably superior antagonist whose consciousness of herself or himself and of the Palestinian is exactly, *positionally*, superior. Among the many examples of this demonstrated superiority there is naturally the Balfour Declaration made in November 1917 by the British Government in the form of a letter to Lord Rothschild (who represented Zionist interests for the occasion), in which the Government undertook to "view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people." What is important about the Declaration is, first, that it has long formed the juridical basis of Zionist claims to Palestine and second, more crucial for our purposes here, that it was a statement whose positional force can only be appreciated when the demographic, or human realities of Palestine are clearly understood. For the Declaration was made (a) by a European power (b) about a non-

³Israel Shahak, "Arab Villages Destroyed by Israel: A Report, 12/2/1973," in *Documents from Israel, 1967-1973: Readings for a Critique of Zionism*, ed. Uri Davis and Norton Mezvinsky (London: Ithaca Press, 1975), p. 44.

⁴*Sunday Times* (London), June 19, 1977.

⁵Janet Abu-Lughod, "The Demographic Transformation of Palestine," in *The Transformation of Palestine*, ed. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971), p. 161.

European territory (c) in a flat disregard of both the presences and the wishes of the native majority resident in that territory, and (d) it took the form of a promise about this same territory to another foreign group, that this foreign group might, quite literally, *make* this territory a national home for the Jewish people.

This historical recital quickly sets the stage for my study of Zionism as it was inscribed in the lives of the native Palestinians. It is important, however, to note that I cannot (for reasons of space) make differentiations—although they certainly existed—between the various classes of Arab Palestinians, Palestine's different demographic and economic formations, the various Arab Palestinian political organizations, leading personalities, and the like. I permit myself this telescoping of historical complexities because I have felt it correct to accentuate the truth that, on the one hand, the Zionist view of Palestine has always considered *all Palestinians* without regard to class, creed, or locations, as bodies either to be removed or ignored (if possible); and on the other hand, that the Palestinian opposition to Zionist settler-colonialism was a *national* struggle enlisting, as it did, all segments of political life (in various complex ways of course). What I am dealing with therefore are *some* aspects of a Third World *national* struggle—(a subject traditionally neglected by Western Marxism, ethnocentric to a fault)—although I do not pretend for a moment that the Palestinian workers' and peasants' response to Zionism, the responses of the small nationalistic bourgeoisie, of the country's tribal and feudal rural organizations, of the nascent communist party, were all the *same*, even if I do argue that all of them, for different reasons naturally, took Zionism as the focal point of struggle for their *national* existence. I must leave the history of these different responses to be analyzed critically on another occasion.

II

Every idea or system of ideas exists *somewhere*, it is mixed in with historical circumstances, it is part of what one may very simply call "reality." One of the enduring attributes of self-serving idealism, however, is the notion that ideas are just ideas and that they exist only in the realm of ideas. The tendency to view ideas as pertaining only to a world of abstractions increases among people for whom an idea is essentially perfect, good, uncontaminated by human desires or will. Such a view also applies when the ideas are evil, absolutely perfect in their evil, and so forth. When an idea has become effective—that is, when its value has been proved in reality by its widespread acceptance—of course some revision of it will seem to be necessary, since the idea must be viewed as having taken on some of the characteristics of brute reality. Thus it is frequently argued that such an idea as Zionism, for all its political tribulations and the struggles on its behalf, is at bottom a *constant* idea that expresses the yearning for Jewish political and religious self-determination—for Jewish national selfhood—to be exercised on the promised land. Because Zionism seems to have culminated in the creation of the state of Israel it is also argued that the historical realization of the idea confirms its unchanging essence and, no less important, the means used for its realization. Very little is said about what Zionism entailed for non-Jews who happened to have encountered it; for that matter nothing is said about where outside Jewish history it took place and from what in the historical context of nineteenth century Europe Zionism drew its force. To the Palestinian, for whom Zionism

was somebody else's idea imported into Palestine and for which in a very concrete way he or she was made to pay and suffer, these forgotten things about Zionism are the very things that are centrally important.

In short, effective political ideas like Zionism need to be examined historically in two ways: (1) *genealogically*, in order that their provenance, their kinship and descent, their affiliation both with other ideas and with political institutions may be demonstrated; (2) as practical systems for *accumulation* (of power, land, ideological legitimacy) and *displacement* (of people, other ideas, prior legitimacy). Present political and cultural actualities make such an examination extraordinarily difficult, as much because Zionism in the advanced capitalist West has acquired for itself an almost unchallenged hegemony in liberal "establishment" discourse, as because in keeping with one of its central ideological characteristics Zionism had hidden, or caused to disappear, the literal historical ground of its growth, its political cost to the native inhabitants of Palestine, and its militantly oppressive discriminations between Jews and non-Jews. Consider as a startling instance of what I mean, the symbolism of a former head of the Irgun terror gang,—in whose autobiography there are numerous admissions of cold-blooded murder of Arab civilians⁶—being honored as Israeli premier at Northwestern University in May 1978 with a doctorate of laws *honoris causa*, a leader whose army a scant month before had created 300,000 new refugees in South Lebanon, who spoke constantly of "Judea and Samaria" as "rightful" parts of the Jewish state (claims made on the basis of the Old Testament and without so much as a reference to the land's actual inhabitants): and all this—on the part of the press or the so-called intellectual community—without one sign of comprehension that Menachem Begin's honored position came about literally at the expense of Palestinian Arab silence in the Western "marketplace of ideas," that the entire historical duration of a Jewish state in Palestine prior to 1948 was a sixty year period two millenia ago, that the dispersion of the Palestinians was not a fact of nature but a result of specific force and strategies. The concealment by Zionism of its own history has by now therefore become institutionalized, and not only in Israel. To bring out its history as in a sense it was exacted from Palestine and the Palestinians, these victims on whose suppression Zionism and Israel have depended, is thus a specific intellectual/political task, and an important part of the worldwide struggle

⁶Menachem Begin, *The Revolt* (1948, reprt. Los Angeles: Nash Publishing, 1972), p. 162. Red Cross figures for the massacre at Deir Yassin specify about 250 civilians, mostly women and children. Of this group, Begin has the following to say: "The fighting was thus very severe. Yet the hostile propaganda, disseminated throughout the world, deliberately ignored the fact that the civilian population of Deir Yassin was actually given a warning by us before the battle began. One of our tenders carrying a loud speaker was stationed at the entrance to the village and it exhorted in Arabic all women, children and aged to leave their houses and to take shelter on the slope of the hill. By giving this humane warning our fighters threw away the element of complete surprise, and thus increased their own risk in the ensuing battle." Despite the Irgun's humane warning these unfortunates were slaughtered. Of Begin, David Ben Gurion said in May 1963: "Begin is a thoroughly Hitlerite type, ready to destroy all the Arabs for the wholeness, who devotes all his efforts for a holy purpose . . . and it has a clear meaning: the murder of tens of Jews, Arabs, and Englishmen—in the explosion of the King David Hotel, the pogrom in Deir Yassin and the murder of Arab women and children. . . . I have no doubt that Begin hates Hitler—but this hatred does not prove that he is different from him, and when for the first time I heard Begin on the radio—I heard the voice and the screeching of Hitler" (quoted in *Israleft*, # 108; the text is from a letter by Ben Gurion to Haim Guri). Perhaps one ought also to mention that the present Secretary General of the Jewish Agency (executive of the World Zionist Congress) is one Shmuel Lehis who was convicted as a criminal in 1948 for murdering at least 35 Arabs in cold blood in Hula village; Lehis was given an unconditional amnesty (his sentence was to have been 7 years), and rose to the top of the Zionist hierarchy. See "The Strange Case of Shmuel Lehis" by R. Barkan, *Al Hamishmar*, 3/3/78.

against imperialism, against the techniques of secrecy and domination, ahistorical rhetoric, and (in the U.S. at least) against liberal hegemony.⁷

The special, one might even call it the privileged, place in this struggle of the United States is impressive—for all sorts of reasons. In no other country, except Israel, is Zionism enshrined as an unquestioned good, and in no other country (also the world's leading imperialist power) is there so strong a conjuncture of powerful institutions and interests—the press, the liberal intelligentsia, the military-industrial complex, the academic community, labor unions—for whom uncritical support of Israel and Zionism enhances their domestic as well as international standing. Although there has recently been some modulation in this remarkable consensus—due to the influence of Arab oil, the emergence of countervailing Muslim right-wing states allied to the U.S. (Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt), and the redoubtable political and military visibility of the Palestinian people and their representatives, the PLO—the prevailing pro-Israeli bias persists. For not only does it have deep cultural roots in the West generally, the U.S. in particular, but its *negative, interdictory* character vis-a-vis the *whole* historical reality is systematic. Both these things require brief exposition here, at least enough for us to grasp the true political meaning of a critical analysis of Zionism in the present circumstances.

Consider now the two attributes, one affirmative, the other negative and interdictory, that give Zionism its unique, almost unchallenged cultural force here. One is a long-standing commitment by Zionism, as an essentially Western ideology, to presenting itself to the world as legitimate, to legitimizing itself *internationally*. Everything the Zionists did in Palestine they did of course as settler-Colonialists; yet everything they did in Palestine was enacted on the world-stage so to speak in a rhetoric and costume fundamentally of the same sort as the cultural currency of the period. Thus Zionism initially portrayed itself as a movement bringing civilization to a barbaric and/or empty locale, and indeed from 1880 to 1918 the movement marketed itself to the Ottoman and British Empires as advancing their schemes for Palestine. Later of course Zionism transformed itself into a movement bringing Western democracy to the East, so much so that by the forties and fifties major figures in the U.S. who had no particular connection with Middle Eastern politics—men and women like Reinhold Niebuhr, Edmund Wilson, Eleanor Roosevelt⁸—could speak on behalf of Zionism and its *mission civilisatrice* with a sort of natural affirmation. The centrality of Zionism to the American experience, and not only because there existed here a highly politicized Jewish community, became practically a fact of nature. Moreover Zionism was a movement for acquiring land in the Orient during a period when in only one century (1815–1918) Europe's overseas territorial acquisitions increased from 35% to 85% of the earth's surface.

The second proposition about Zionism is best derived, I think, from a remark made by Lord Balfour in 1919. As the author of the Balfour Declaration he found himself frequently reiterating his attitude towards Zionism.

⁷See my account of this in "The Idea of Palestine in the West," *MERIP Reports*, September 1978. For a general description of liberal acrobatics see Noam Chomsky, *Human Rights and American Foreign Policy* (London: Spokesman Books, 1978).

⁸See Niebuhr's letter to the *New York Times*, November 21, 1947 and his "A New View of Palestine" in *The Spectator*, August 6, 1946; for Wilson see his *Black, Red, Blond, and Olive* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), pp. 462–3, where he speaks about the "natural contempt" that Westerners (like himself presumably) have for Arabs, and about "the rather stupid obstinacy of the Arab refugees in Jordan, who have refused the offers of UNRWA to accommodate them in other localities and continue to insist on returning to their villages and farms in Israel." Roosevelt's position is too well-known to require documentation here.

The contradiction between the Letter of the Covenant [the Anglo-French Declaration of 1918 promising the Arabs of former Ottoman colonies, including Palestine, that as a reward for supporting the Allies they would have their independence] is even more flagrant in the case of the independent nation of Palestine than in that of the independent nation of Syria. For in Palestine we do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country, though the American Commission has been going through the form of asking what they are. The four great powers are committed to Zionism and Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long tradition, in present needs, in future hopes, of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land. In my opinion that is right.⁹

The difference between what Balfour considered to be important and what he dismissed as unimportant is accounted for by a complex network of values, power relations, and epistemological perspectives: on the one hand, there are superior Europeans, on the other, natives, inferior Orientals. Later in this essay I discuss this difference in some detail, and in a recent book I treat its considerable history at great length. Here I want only to comment on its consequences for any history of the subsequent conflict between native Palestinians and the Zionist colonists. Despite the Arab majority both the Zionists and the British took as their point of departure the cultural judgment that the Arab Palestinians need not be heard from and indeed, as I show a little later, the Zionists set out systematically to reduce the Palestinians either to a non-existent population or to strip down those who remained to the status of a silent coolie class.

The sheer mechanics of the process by which Zionism caused land and demographic alienation in Palestine requires study on its own, which is why in this essay I treat it as an autonomous subject. Nevertheless such a subject is neither a fragment of antiquarian history, nor a chapter in the by now familiar story of how the Third World has been exploited by Europe. In the case of Zionism and the Palestinians any attempt in the United States to give the Palestinian case some material substance—if only by writing about it—has to be seen as a concrete part of the struggle against Zionism, racism, and imperialism. For in essence Zionism and its partisans, because they command the resources of diffusion and representation in the West, have in the West effaced the Palestinian, his or her history, his or her actuality. Take as a simple instance of this effacement the fact that there exists in the United States not a single book on the Palestinians by a Palestinian. Articles appear from time to time in the press, but the accumulation, consideration, and gravity of a text/book, as well as the vital testimonial sense of human struggle against oppression, are kept from the Palestinian case. Even the book from which this essay of mine is excerpted has been refused by the publisher who originally contracted for it, mainly because there is a consensus that except as nuisances, terrorists, or anonymous refugees, the Palestinians do not exist, have no history politically.¹⁰

⁹Christopher Sykes, *Crossroads to Israel, 1947-1948*, (1965, rpt. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), p. 5.

¹⁰There is a detailed account of press and publishing censorship imposed on the Palestinian problem (by consensus) in England in Christopher Mayhew and Michael Adams, *Publish It Not: The Middle East Cover-Up* (London: Longman Group, 1975). Note furthermore that any Israeli or pro-Israeli book is routinely reviewed in the *New York Times* by an Israeli or a well-known pro-Israeli (e.g., Irving Howe on Saul Bellow's *To Jerusalem and Back*, Saul Bellow on Teddy Kollek's book about his experience as mayor of Jerusalem, etc.) Yet any book by an Arab, or someone critical of Israel is just as routinely reviewed by a pro-Zionist critic (e.g., Michael Walzer on Chomsky's *Peace in the Middle East?*, or Nadav Safran, very recently, on Sadat's autobiography). The *New York Review of Books* has literally never printed anything by a Palestinian since the Palestinian question came to the fore

Therefore a historical study such as this must set out consciously and deliberately to provide not only the Palestinian history suppressed programatically by Zionism and the liberal imperialism of the West, but also as an integral part of this counter-memory, to make available to Western radicals a counter-archive of material about settler-colonialism.¹¹ The very fact that I *can* write and speak as a Palestinian, in however limited a way, is a sign that imperialist hegemony is at last beginning to be challenged. To put what Marx called the weapons of criticism to use in this way is also to narrow the distance between the luxuries of academic discourse and the processes of political struggle. Even the assertion of Palestinian identity therefore takes on the form of a political challenge, since in Israel Palestinians are identified formally only as “non-Jews,” and elsewhere their existence is either doubted or considered to be disruptive.¹²

Yet there is no getting around the formidable historical reality that in writing about the Palestinian struggle against Zionist settler-colonialism one also abuts the entire disastrous problem of anti-Semitism on the one hand, and on the other, the complex interrelationship between the Palestinians and the Arab states. Anyone who recently watched the NBC presentation of *Holocaust* was aware that at least part of the program was intended as a justification for Zionism—even while at about the same time Israeli troops in Lebanon produced devastation, thousands of civilian casualties, and untold suffering of a sort likened by a few courageous reporters to the U.S. devastation of Vietnam.¹³ Similarly the furor created by the package deal in which U.S. war planes were sold to Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia made the predicament of Arab liberation interlocking with right-wing Arab regimes even more acute. The task of criticism or—to put it in another way—the role of the critical consciousness is in such cases to be able to make distinctions, to produce differences where at present there are none. To oppose Zionism in Palestine has never meant, and does not now mean, being anti-Semitic; conversely, the struggle for Palestinian rights and self-determination does not mean support for the Saudi royal family, nor for the antiquated and oppressive state structure of most of the Arab nations.

One must admit, however, that all liberals, and even most “radicals” have been unable to overcome the Zionist maneuver of equating anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism. Any well-meaning person can thus oppose South African or American racism, and tacitly support Zionist racial presentation of non-Jews in Palestine. The almost total absence of any handily available historical knowledge from non-Zionist sources, the dissemination by the media of malicious simplifications (e.g., Jews vs. Arabs), the cynical opportunism of various Zionist pressure groups, the tendency endemic to university intellectuals uncritically to repeat cant phrases and political clichés (this is the role Gramsci assigned to traditional intellectuals, that of being “experts in legitimation”), the fear of treading upon the highly volatile terrain of what Jews did, in an age of genocidal extermination of Jews: all this contributes to the dulling, regulated enforcement of almost unanimous support for Israel. But, as I.F. Stone recently noted, this unanimity exceeds even the Zionism of most Israelis.

after 1974: during 1978, however, NYRB has printed articles more or less critical of Israel by I.F. Stone, Guido Goldmann, and Stanley Hoffman, all of them supporting some sort of Palestinian self-determination, and yet the iron barrier against Palestinians—of whom there is no shortage—representing themselves remains.

¹¹See the Bibliographic Note at the end of this essay.

¹²Cf. Golda Meir’s remark in 1969: The Palestinians don’t exist. General Rabin always referred to them as “so-called Palestinians.”

¹³See H.D.S. Greenway, “Vietnam-style Raids Gut South Lebanon: Israel Leaves a Path of Destruction,” *Washington Post*, March 25, 1978.

Above all such an intellectual atmosphere effectively kills off proper criticism, critical consciousness, and the struggle to concern oneself genuinely with truth and justice.

For criticism needs therefore to think of itself as a form of struggle, particularly I think given the present doldrums in the American academy. Literary and humanistic criticism has for the most part become not only a run-down annex to a branch of hermetic-quietistic philosophy (despite the totally misleading rhetoric of those who claim that what they do is "revolutionary"); it has also become radically ahistorical, jargonistically technical, and wholly marginal in its relationship to the world.¹⁴ For the most part the literary critic has not freed him/herself from the aestheticism of the New Criticism, and has been unable to conceive of literature except as a "field" separate from every other. Insofar as the literary Marxist has not extended his interest to the study of imperialism, to the whole problem of intercultural relations, and to the historical density of specific political conflict, then there too even Marxism is less effective than its critical perspectives entitle it to be. Nevertheless, it is among Marxists that one senses a revival of political vitality.

Perhaps the most curious result of the ghetto mentality in literary studies has been the academic immunity of the ideological (i.e., social) and policy sciences like sociology, political studies, history, from true criticism—that is, from the kind of criticism associated with the rhetoric, if not the practice, of post-modern literary theory. With one or two exceptions, no person who by departmental affiliation is a part of the literary-critical establishment has turned his/her attention to the ideological-policy sciences. There one would be able to witness the most extraordinary scandals of scholarship, the most horrendous travesties of knowledge. To have read during the 60s Noam Chomsky's "Objectivity and Liberal Scholarship"¹⁵ is to have been afforded a glimpse of the iceberg's tip. And of course the scandals persist, and worsen. Thus it becomes the imperative for critical consciousness to invade and even upset ideological fields of knowledge, using the weapons of criticism, of history, of counter-memory; only in such ways can *reading*, in which as literary experts we are supposed to excel, be put to use in the interests of history, struggle, and political involvement. For the ideological-policy sciences are not mere academic provinces: they effectively determine interests, they produce policy for all the areas of human experience, and above all they are actively concerned with *power*. The critic's relationship with them must therefore be *forceful*, since only by *ex-posing* them, by upsetting their smiling, well-satisfied faces, by overturning and revealing the violence of their seemingly "scientific" premises, can they be defeated.

Let me give a relatively short account here of what I mean and then apply it to the field of so-called Middle East Studies. I have studied the phenomenon of "Orientalism" in a recent book, *Orientalism* (New York Pantheon, 1978); there is a Palestinian side to the story which requires telling now. Remember first of all that whereas it is true that in Europe the roots of "Orientalism" are to be found both in the rise of philology during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, as well as in a long tradition of representing the Orient in imaginative literature (from Aeschylus, to Dante, to Flaubert, to Disraeli, and beyond), the study of the Orient developed especially well in countries that had a large imperial stake in the Orient. France and England thus led the field, although Russia,

¹⁴See my "Interview" in *Diacritics* (Fall, 1976) and a forthcoming essay "Reflections on Recent 'Left' Criticism," *Boundary Two*.

¹⁵In his *American Power and the New Mandarins* (New York: Pantheon, 1968); see also the continuation of these arguments in Chomsky's *For Reasons of State* (New York: Vintage, 1973).

Germany, and Holland were important contributors. In the U.S., aside from missionary interest in the Middle East during the 19th century, "Orientalism" came of age as a fully-fledged academic enterprise only after World War Two, that is, when the great European empires were replaced by the American empire. Therefore since the middle forties of this century, American university "area studies" programs in general, Middle East Studies in particular, have always been carried on—despite the cachet of scholarly objectivity—as academic adjuncts to, and intellectual disciplines that are a crucial part of U.S. government and business interests in the Middle East. I do not here need to do more than mention the geopolitical strategy of the U.S. in the area, nor the importance of Near Eastern oil to the U.S. economy, nor the re-investment (in U.S. exports and so-called down-stream operations) of Arab petro-dollars in the U.S. military-industrial complex. Middle East studies in the universities have contributed an enormous amount of material to U.S. policy in the area, and as the MERIP collective has shown, the interlocking of personnel in government, the universities, the oil industries, the military, and the intelligence "community" has been truly impressive.¹⁶

Thus to be interested in Middle East studies, or "Orientalism" as I have called it, is to try to take on not merely an ivory-towered speciality but a powerful apparatus at work on behalf of the specific U.S. goals of political and economic domination (for which the academic euphemism is "understanding") of a weaker, hegemonically inferior culture, region, people. Now one of the great myths supported by the academic industry—which is itself nourished by a liberal culture in the university telling students that "we" must try to learn about the world we live in, that it is good to be good neighbors, good "partners" helping the "underdeveloped" world—is that such area studies programs pretend to be essentially pragmatic, empirical, anti-theoretical (that is, anti-Marxist). But if you look carefully at all the expert literature produced both in government and in the university since World War Two you will never find yourself in any way prepared either to understand or to come to terms with the major revolutionary upheavals in the Middle East. Thus literally nothing produced by Orientalism or Middle East scholarly expertise has either explained or accounted for the continuing resistance of the Palestinian people to Zionist oppression, nor for the Lebanese civil war, nor for the enormous cultural revolution that has taken place in the Arab states. The going jargon amongst the area experts takes no account of class conflict, nor of lived history, nor of the complex intrinsic formation and production of Arab society. Instead one gets a never-ending parade of pseudo-terms and concepts—"elites," "traditional values," "modernization," and so forth—whose main job is to keep the experts in business, the Middle East misunderstood (hence capable of manipulation), and the U.S. in control if not of the whole area (one can't even if one is the U.S., ultimately run another people) then of its irreducibly retrogressive interests there.¹⁷

The study of Middle Eastern culture, history, popular movements, class formation is thus, in the context I sketched above, a fundamentally oppositional anti-imperialist activity. Even the use of theory, or of complex adversary theoretical models developed by Foucault, Gramsci, Lukacs, Fanon, and others in what I have called criticism between culture and system, is oppositional work. For aside from academic Middle East studies being, as Anwar Abdel Malek has astutely remarked, backward when compared to theory and knowledge found elsewhere in *sciences humaines*,¹⁸ these studies have been (a) malicious in

¹⁶"Middle East Studies Network in the United States," *MERIP Reports* 38 (June 1975).

¹⁷See *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, ed. Talal Asad (London: Ithaca Press, 1975).

¹⁸Anwar Abdel-Malek, "Orientalism in Crisis," *Diogenes* 44 (Winter, 1963), 107–8.

deliberately ignoring any developments in the region that might upset the U.S.'s view of its own policy interests, and (b) set, like Zionism, on constructing an "Other" to be opposed, managed, or pacified. There is a very straight line leading from the total reluctance of U.S. policy-makers during the 40's and 50's to recognize the political existence of the Palestinian people (and with that the absence of any mention of the Palestinians in the standard university texts of the period)¹⁹ to the present asseveration by the U.S. government that Palestinians (unnamed, unspecified) should (or perhaps may) participate in the determination of their own future (whatever the phrase, in its insulting racist condescension and cruelty, may mean). That the Palestine Liberation Organization has gained the loyalty of every Palestinian everywhere, or that it has been considered the "legitimate" representative of the Palestinian people by over 100 nations: these are things denied by the U.S., Israel, and policy-making academics, whose own view of the matter is that the Palestinians are abstractions to be manipulated, or a people created, in a sense, to fit a highly profitable version of the Pax Americana.²⁰ Thus as the situation festers in the Middle East, the same mindless clichés are spewed out by the academic cum governmental experts, whose encouragement of the Sadat peace-initiative has been deliberately blind to the seething turmoil, or the truly complicated social dynamics of the region.

These actualities constitute the institutional production of knowledge—and its critical adversary—a real field of conflict. On the one hand there is the critic who understands that truth, power, and "interests" are always intertwined, but that there are libertarian values always at play to which men and women commit their lives seriously and around which struggles of national, cultural, and intellectual liberation always turn; on the other hand, there are imperialism and domination as well as a knowledge produced for and out of those purposes, a knowledge always denying its complicities in the historical circumstances of its production (and reproduction), always proclaiming its openness, its fairness, its objectivity, even as its agents and agencies undertake real projects of racist war, genocide, economic oppression, intellectual domination, and manipulative construction. At least so far as the Palestinian struggle is concerned, it has long seemed to me that there is a truth to be told, that there has been injustice and oppression done (to Jews and to Palestinians, in different ways of course) but that for many reasons the Palestinian cause has never—and I mean to suggest the severity of real and systematically regulated intellectual censorship—been openly discussed.²¹ What I aim to do therefore is to record the concealed history of Zionism as it has been exacted from the native Palestinian: this is only a rudimentary form of struggle but it is obviously a significant aspect of the Palestinian rise to political consciousness, our movement toward self-determination, toward filling a historical role in the contemporary world.

Yet in so doing it would be totally unjust to neglect the power of Zionism as an idea for Jews, or to minimize the complex internal debates characterizing Zionism, its true meaning, its messianic destiny, and so on. Even to speak about this subject, much less than attempting to "define" Zionism, is for an Arab quite a difficult matter. Let me use myself as an example. Most of my education, and certainly all my basic intellectual formation, are Western; in what

¹⁹As an instance see the treatment (really, the non-treatment) of the Palestinians in *Social Forces in the Middle East*, ed., S.N. Fisher (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1955).

²⁰See Edward W. Said, "The United States and the Conflict of Powers in the Middle East," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, II, 3 (Spring 1973), 30–50.

²¹For an analogous kind of censorship, see Noam Chomsky, "10 Years After Tet: The Big Story that Got Away," *MORE*, 8, 6 (June 1978), 16–23.

I have read, in what I write about, even in what I do politically, I am profoundly influenced by mainstream Western attitudes towards the history of the Jews, anti-Semitism, the destruction of European Jewry. Unlike most other Arab intellectuals, the majority of whom obviously have not had my kind of background, I have been directly exposed to those aspects of Jewish history and experience that have mattered singularly for Jews and for Western non-Jews reading and thinking about Jewish history. I know as well as any educated non-Jew can know, what anti-Semitism has meant for the Jews, especially in this century. Consequently I can understand the intertwined terror and the exultation out of which Zionism has been nourished, and I think I can at least grasp the meaning of Israel for Jews, and even for the enlightened Western liberal. And yet, because I am an Arab Palestinian, I can also see and feel other things—and it is these that complicate matters considerably, that cause me also to focus on Zionism's *other* aspects. The result is, I think, worth describing, not because what I think is so crucial, but because it is useful to see the same phenomenon in two complementary ways, not normally associated with each other.

One can begin with a literary example; George Eliot's last novel *Daniel Deronda* (1876). The unusual thing about the book is that its main subject is Zionism, although the novel's principle themes are recognizable to anyone who has read Eliot's earlier fiction. Seen in the context of Eliot's general interest in idealism and spiritual yearning, Zionism for her was one in a series of worldly projects for the nineteenth century mind still committed to hopes for a secular religious community. In her earlier books Eliot had studied a variety of enthusiasms, all of them replacements for organized religion, all of them attractive to persons who would have been St. Teresas had they lived during a period of coherent faith. The reference to St. Teresa was originally made by Eliot in *Middlemarch*; in using it to describe the novel's heroine, Dorothea Brooke, Eliot intended to compliment her on her visionary and moral energy sustained despite the absence in the modern world of certain assurances for faith and knowledge. Dorothea emerges at the end of *Middlemarch* as a chastened woman, forced to concede her grand visions of a "fulfilled" life in return for a relatively modest domestic success as a wife and mother. It is this considerably diminished view of things that *Daniel Deronda*, and Zionism in particular, revise upward: towards a genuinely hopeful socio-religious project in which individual energies can be merged and identified with a collective national vision, the whole emanating out of Judaism.

The novel's plot alternates between the presentation of a bitter comedy of manners involving a surprisingly rootless segment of the British upper bourgeoisie, and the gradual revelation to Daniel Deronda—an exotic young man whose parentage is unknown but who is the ward of Sir Hugo Mallinger—of his Jewish identity and, when he becomes the spiritual disciple of Mordecai Ezra Cohen, his Jewish destiny. At the end of the novel Daniel marries Mirah, Mordecai's sister, and commits himself to fulfilling Mordecai's hopes for the future of the Jews. Mordecai dies as the young pair gets married, although it is clear well before his death that his Zionist ideas have been passed on to Daniel, so much so that among the newlyweds' "splendid wedding-gifts" is "a complete equipment for Eastern travel" provided by Sir Hugo and Lady Mallinger. For Daniel and his wife will be travelling to Palestine presumably to set the great Zionist plan in motion.

The crucial thing about the way Zionism is presented in the novel is that its backdrop is a generalized condition of homelessness. Not only the Jews, but even the well-born Englishmen and women in the novel are portrayed as wandering and alienated beings. If the novel's poorer English people (for example, Mrs. Davilow and her daughters) seem always to be moving from one rented house to another, the wealthy aristocrats are no less cut off

from some permanent home. Thus Eliot uses the plight of Jews to make a universal statement about the nineteenth century's need for a home, given the spiritual and psychological rootlessness reflected in her characters' almost ontological physical restlessness. Her interest in Zionism therefore can be traced to the reflection, made early in the novel, that

a human life, I think, should be well rooted in some spot of a native land, where it may get the love of tender kinship for the face of the earth, for the labours men go forth to, for the sounds and accents that haunt it, for whatever will give that early home a familiar unmistakable difference amidst the future widening of knowledge.²²

To find the "early home" means to find the place where originally one was *at home*, a task to be undertaken more or less interchangeably by individuals and by "people." It becomes historically appropriate therefore that those individuals and that "people" best suited to the task are Jews. Only the Jews as a people (and consequently as individuals) have retained both a sense of their original home in Zion and an acute, always contemporary, feeling of loss. Despite the prevalence of anti-Semitism everywhere the Jews are a reproach to the Gentiles who have long since forsaken the "observance" of any civilizing communal belief. Thus Mordecai puts these sentiments positively as a definite program for today's Jews:

They [the Gentiles] scorn our people's ignorant observance; but the most accursed ignorance is that which has no observance—sunk to the cunning greed of the fox, to which all law is no more than a trap or the cry of the worrying hound. There is a degradation deep down below the memory that has withered into superstition. In the multitudes of the ignorant on three continents who observe our rites and make the confession of the divine Unity, the soul of Judaism is not dead. Revive the organic centre: let the unity of Israel which has made the growth and form of its religion be an outward reality. Looking towards a land and a polity, our dispersed people in all the ends of the earth may share the dignity of a national life which has a voice among the peoples of the East and the West—which will plant the wisdom and skill of our race so that it may be, as of old, a medium of transmission and understanding. Let that come to pass, and the living warmth will spread to the weak extremities of Israel, and superstition will vanish, not in the lawlessness of the renegade, but in the illumination of great facts which widen feeling, and make all knowledge alive as the young offspring of beloved memories.²³

"The illumination of great facts which widen feeling" is a typical phrase for Eliot, and there is no doubt that her approbation for her Zionists derives from her belief that they were a group almost exactly expressing her own grand ideas about an expanded life of feelings. Yet if there is a felt reality about "the peoples of the West" there is no such reality for the "peoples of the East." They are named it is true, but are no more substantial than a phrase. The few references to the East in *Daniel Deronda* are always to England's Indian colonies, for whose people—as people having wishes, values, aspirations—Eliot expresses the complete indifference of absolute silence. Of the fact that Zion will be "planted" in the East, Eliot takes no very detailed account; it is as if the phrase "the peoples of the East and the West" covers what will, territorially at least, be a neutral inaugural reality. In turn that reality will be replaced by a permanent accomplishment when the newly founded state becomes the "medium of transmission and understanding." For how could Eliot imagine that even Eastern peoples would object to such grand benefits for all?

There is, however, a disturbing insistence on these matters when Mordecai continues his speech. For him Zionism means that "our race takes on again the character of a

²²George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (London: Penguin, 1967), p. 50.

²³Ibid., p. 592.

nationality. . . a labour which shall be a worthy fruit of the long anguish whereby our fathers maintained their separateness, refusing the ease of falsehood." Zionism is to be a dramatic lesson for mankind. But what ought to catch the reader's attention about the way Mordecai illustrates his thesis is his depiction of the land:

[The Jews] have wealth enough *to redeem the soil from debauched and paupered conquerors*; they have the skill of the statesman to devise, the tongue of the orator to persuade. And is there no prophet or poet among us to make the ears of Christian Europe tingle with shame at the hideous obloquy of Christian strife *which the Turk gazes at* [the reference here is to the long history of European disputes about the Holy Land] *as at the fighting of beasts to which he has lent an arena?* There is store of wisdom among us *to found a new Jewish polity, grand, simple, just like the old*—a republic where there is equality of protection, an equality which shone like a star on the forehead of our ancient community, *and gave it more than the brightness of Western freedom amid the despotisms of the East*. Then our race shall have an organic centre, a heart and brain to watch and guide and execute; *the outraged Jew shall have a defence in the court of nations*, as the outraged Englishman or American. And the world will gain as Israel gains. For there will be a community in the van of the East which carries the culture and the sympathies of every great nation in its bosom; *there will be a land set for a halting-place of enmities, a neutral ground for the East as Belgium is for the West*. Difficulties? I know there are difficulties. But let the spirit of sublime achievement move in the great among our people, and the work will begin (emphases added).²⁴

The land itself is characterized in two separate ways. On the one hand it is associated with debauched and paupered conquerors, an arena lent by the Turk to fighting beasts, a part of the despotic East; on the other, with "the brightness of Western freedom," with nations like England and America, with the idea of neutrality (Belgium). In short, with a degraded and unworthy East, and with a noble, enlightened West. The bridge between those warring representatives of East and West will be Zionism.

Interestingly, Eliot cannot sustain her admiration of Zionism except by seeing it as a method for transforming the East into the West. This is not to say that she does not have sympathy for Zionism and for the Jews themselves: she obviously does. But there is a whole area of Jewish experience, lying somewhere between longing for a homeland (which everyone, including the Gentile, feels) and actually getting it, that she is dim about. Otherwise she is quite capable of seeing that Zionism can easily be accommodated to several varieties of Western (as opposed to Eastern) thought, principal among them the idea that the East is degraded, that it needs reconstruction according to enlightened Western notions about politics, that any reconstructed portion of the East can with small reservations become as "English as England" to its new inhabitants. Underlying all this, however, is the total absence of any thought about the actual inhabitants of the East, Palestine in particular. They are irrelevant both to the Zionists in *Daniel Deronda* and to the English characters. Brightness, freedom, and redemption—key matters for Eliot—are to be restricted to Europeans and the Jews, who are themselves European prototypes so far as colonizing the East is concerned. There is a remarkable failure when it comes to taking anything non-European into consideration, although curiously all of Eliot's descriptions of Jews stress their exotic, "Eastern" aspects. Humanity and sympathy it seems are not endowments of anything but an Occidental mentality; to look for them in the despotic East, much less find them, is to waste one's time.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 594–5.

Two points need to be made immediately. One is that Eliot is no different from other European apostles of sympathy, humanity, and understanding for whom noble sentiments were either left behind in Europe, or made programmatically inapplicable outside Europe. There are the chastening examples of John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx (both of whom I have discussed in my *Orientalism*),²⁵ two thinkers known doctrinally to be opponents of injustice and oppression. Yet both of them seemed to have believed that such ideas as liberty, representative government, and individual happiness must not be applied in the Orient for reasons that today we would call racist. The fact is that nineteenth century European culture was racist with a greater or lesser degree of virulence depending on the individual: Renan, for instance, was an outright anti-Semite, Eliot was indifferent to races who could not be assimilated to European ideas.

Here we come to the second point. Eliot's account of Zionism in *Daniel Deronda* was intended as a sort of assenting Gentile response to prevalent Jewish-Zionist currents; the novel therefore serves as an indication of how much in Zionism was legitimated and indeed valorized by gentile European thought. On one important issue there was complete agreement between the gentile and Jewish versions of Zionism: their view of the Holy Land as essentially empty of inhabitants, not because there were no inhabitants—there were, and they were frequently described in numerous travel accounts, in novels like Disraeli's *Tancred*, even in the various 19th century Baedekers—but because their status as sovereign and human inhabitants was systematically denied. While it may be possible to differentiate between Jewish and gentile Zionists on this point (they ignored the Arab inhabitants for different reasons), the Palestinian Arab was ignored nevertheless. That is what needs emphasis, the extent to which the roots of Jewish *and* gentile Zionism are in the culture of high capitalism, and how the work of its liberals like George Eliot, reinforced, perhaps also completed that culture's less attractive tendencies.

None of what I have so far said applies adequately to what Zionism meant for Jews or what it represented as an advanced idea for enthusiastic non-Jews; it applies exclusively to those less fortunate beings who happened to be living on the land, people of whom no notice was taken. What has too long been forgotten is that while important European thinkers considered the desirable and later the probable fate of Palestine, the land was being tilled, villages and towns built and lived in by thousands of natives who, for want of knowing better, believed that it was *their* homeland. In the meantime their actual physical being was ignored; later it became a troublesome detail. Strikingly therefore, Eliot sounds very much like Moses Hess, an important figure in the development of Marx's own early thought, who in his *Rome and Jerusalem* (1862) uses the same theoretical language to be given to Mordecai:

What we have to do at present for the regeneration of the Jewish nation is, first, to keep alive the hope of the political rebirth of our people, and, next, to reawaken that hope where it slumbers. When political conditions in the Orient shape themselves so as to permit the organization of a beginning of the restoration of the Jewish state, this beginning will express itself in the founding of Jewish colonies in the land of their ancestors, to which enterprise France will undoubtedly lend a hand. France, beloved friend, is the savior who will restore our people to its place in universal history.

²⁵Said, *Orientalism*, op. cit., pp. 153–7, 214, 228.

Just as we once searched in the West for a road to India, and incidentally discovered a new world, so will our lost fatherland be rediscovered on the road to India and China that is now being built in the Orient.²⁶

Hess continues his paean to France (since every Zionist saw one or another of the imperial powers as patron) by quoting at some length from Ernest Laharanne's *The New Eastern Question*, from which Hess draws the following passage for his peroration:

"A great calling is reserved for the Jews: to be a living channel of communication between three continents. You shall be the bearers of civilization to peoples who are still inexperienced and their teachers in the European sciences, to which your race has contributed so much. You shall be the mediators between Europe and far Asia, opening the roads that lead to India and China—those unknown regions which must ultimately be thrown open to civilisation. You will come to the land of your fathers decorated with the crown of age-long martyrdom, and there, finally, you will be completely healed from all your ills! Your capital will again bring the wide stretches of barren land under cultivation; your labor and industry will once more turn the ancient soil into fruitful valleys, reclaiming it from the encroaching sands of the desert, and the world will again pay its homage to the oldest of peoples."²⁷

Between them Hess and Eliot concur that Zionism is to be carried out by the Jews with the assistance of major European powers; that Zionism will restore "a lost fatherland," and in so doing mediate between the various civilizations; that present-day Palestine was in need of cultivation, civilization, reconstitution; that Zionism would finally bring enlightenment and progress where at present there was neither. The three ideas that depend on each other in Hess and Eliot—and later in almost every Zionist thinker or ideologist—are (a) the non-existent Arab inhabitants, (b) the complementary Western-Jewish attitude to an "empty" territory, and (c) the restorative Zionist project, which would repeat by rebuilding a vanished Jewish State and combine it with modern elements like disciplined, separate colonies, a special agency for land acquisition, etc. Of course none of these ideas would have any force were it not for the additional fact of their being addressed to, shaped for and out of an *international* (i.e., non-Oriental, and hence European) context. This context was the reality, not only because of the ethnocentric rationale governing the whole project, but also because of the overwhelming facts of Diaspora realities, and imperialist hegemony over the entire gamut of European culture.

From the earliest phases of its modern evolution until it culminated in the creation of Israel Zionism appealed to a European audience for whom the classification of overseas territories and natives into various uneven classes was canonical and "natural." That is why, for example, every single state or movement in the formerly colonized territories of Africa and Asia today identifies with, fully supports and understands the Palestinian struggle. In many instances—as I hope to show presently—there is an unmistakable coincidence between the experiences of Arab Palestinians at the hands of Zionism and the experiences of those black, yellow, and brown people who were described as inferior and sub-human by 19th century imperialists. For although it coincided with an era of the most virulent Western anti-Semitism, Zionism also coincided, as I said above, with the period of unparalleled European territorial acquisition in Africa and Asia, and it was as part of this general movement of acquisition and occupation that Zionism was launched initially by

²⁶Arthur Hertzberg (ed.), *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader* (New York: Atheneum, 1976), p. 133.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 134.

Herzl. During the latter part of the greatest period in European colonial expansion Zionism also made its crucial first moves along the way to getting what has now become a sizeable Asiatic territory. And it is important to remember that in joining the general Western enthusiasm for overseas territorial acquisition, Zionism *never* spoke of itself unambiguously as a Jewish liberation movement, but rather as a Jewish movement for colonial settlement in the Orient. To those Palestinian victims that Zionism displaced, it *cannot have meant anything by way of sufficient cause* that Jews were victims of European anti-Semitism and, given Israel's continued oppression of Palestinians, few Palestinians are able to see beyond their reality, namely, that Occidental Jews in Israel, once victims themselves, have become oppressors—of Palestinian Arabs and Oriental Jews.

These are not intended to be backward looking historical observations, for in a very vital way they explain and even determine much of what now happens in the Middle East. The fact that no sizeable segment of the Israeli population has as yet been able to confront the terrible social and political injustice done the native Palestinians is an indication of how deeply ingrained are the (by now) anomalous imperialist perspectives basic to Zionism, its view of the world, its sense of an inferior native Other. The fact also that no Palestinian, regardless of political stripe, has been able to reconcile him/herself to Zionism suggests the extent to which, for the Palestinian, Zionism has appeared to be an uncompromisingly exclusionary, discriminatory colonialist *praxis*. So powerful, and so unhesitatingly followed, has been the radical Zionist distinction between privileged Jews in Palestine and unprivileged non-Jews there, that nothing else has emerged, no perception of suffering human existence has escaped from the two camps created thereby.²⁸ As a result it has been impossible for Jews to understand the human tragedy caused the Arab Palestinians by Zionism; and it has been impossible for Arab Palestinians to see in Zionism anything except an ideology and a practice keeping them, and Israeli Jews, imprisoned. But in order to break down the iron circle of inhumanity we must see how it was forged, and there it is ideas and culture itself that play the major role.

Consider Herzl. If it was the Dreyfus Affair that first brought him to Jewish consciousness, it was the idea of overseas colonial settlement for the Jews that came to him at roughly the same time as an antidote for anti-Semitism. The idea itself was very current at the end of the 19th century, even as an idea for Jews. Herzl's first significant contact was Baron Maurice de Hirsch, a wealthy philanthropist who had for some time been behind the Jewish Colonization Association for helping Eastern Jews to emigrate to Argentina and Brazil. Later Herzl thought generally about South America, then about Africa as places for establishing a Jewish colony. Both areas were widely acceptable as places for European colonialism, and that Herzl's mind followed along the orthodox imperialist track of his period is perhaps understandable. The impressive thing, however, is the degree to which Herzl had absorbed and internalized the imperialist perspective on "natives" and their "territory."²⁹

There could have been no doubt whatever in Herzl's mind that Palestine in the late 19th century was peopled. True it was under Ottoman administration (and therefore already a colony) but it had been the subject of numerous travel accounts, most of them very famous,

²⁸See Jiryis, *The Arabs in Israel, passim*; a powerful case is made also by *The Non-Jew in the Jewish State: A Collection of Documents*, ed. Israel Shahak (privately printed by Shahak, 2 Bartenura Street, Jerusalem), 1975.

²⁹See *Imperialism*, ed. Philip D. Curtin (New York: Harper, 1971), which contains a good selection from the imperialist literature of the last 200 years. I survey the intellectual and cultural backgrounds of the period in *Orientalism*, Chs. 2 and 3.

by Lamartine, Chateaubriand, Flaubert, etc. Yet even if he had not read these authors, Herzl as a journalist must surely have looked at a Baedeker to ascertain that Palestine was indeed inhabited by (in the 1880's) 650,000 mostly Arab people. This did not stop him from regarding their presence as manageable in ways that, in his Diary, he spelled out with a rather chilling prescience for what later took place. The mass of poor natives were to be expropriated and, he added, "both the expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly." This was to be done by "spirit[ing] the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our own country." With uncannily accurate cynicism Herzl predicted that the small class of large landowners could be "had for a price"—as indeed they were. The whole scheme for displacing the native population of Palestine far outstripped any of the then current plans for taking over vast reaches of Africa. As Desmond Stewart aptly says:

Herzl seems to have foreseen that in going further than any colonialist had so far gone in Africa, he would, temporarily, alienate civilised opinion. "At first, incidentally," he writes on the pages describing "involuntary expropriation," "people will avoid us. We are in bad odor. By the time the reshaping of world opinion in our favor has been completed, we shall be firmly established in our country, no longer fearing the influx of foreigners, and receiving our visitors with aristocratic benevolence and proud amiability."

This was not a prospect to charm a peon in Argentina or a fellah in Palestine. But Herzl did not intend his Diary for immediate publication.³⁰

One needn't wholly accept the conspiratorial tone of these comments (whether Herzl's or Stewart's) to grant that world opinion has not been, until the 60s and 70s the Palestinians forced their presence on world politics, very much concerned with the expropriation of Palestine. I said earlier that in this regard the major Zionist achievement was getting international legitimization for its own accomplishments, thereby making the Palestinian cost of these accomplishments seem to be irrelevant. But it is clear from Herzl's thinking that that could not have been done unless there was a prior European inclination to view the natives as irrelevant *to begin with*. That is, those natives already fit a more or less acceptable classificatory grid, which made them *sui generis* inferior to Western or white men—and it is this grid that a Zionist like Herzl appropriated, domesticating it from the general culture of his time to the unique needs of a developing Jewish nationalism. One needs to repeat that what in Zionism served the no doubt fully justified ends of Jewish tradition, saving the Jews as a people from homelessness and anti-Semitism, and restoring them to nationhood, also collaborated with those aspects of the dominant Western culture (in which Zionism exclusively and institutionally lived) making it possible for Europeans to view non-Europeans as inferior, marginal, and irrelevant. For the Palestinian Arab, therefore, it is the collaboration that has counted, not by any means the fulfillment of Jewish nationalism. The Arab has been on the receiving end not of benign Zionism—which has been restricted to Jews—but of an essentially discriminatory and powerful culture, of which in Palestine Zionism has been the agent.

Here I should digress to say that the great difficulty today of writing about what has happened to the Arab Palestinian as a result of Zionism is that Zionism has had a large number of successes. There is no question, for example, that most Jews do regard Zionism and Israel as urgently important facts for Jewish life, particularly because of what happened

³⁰Quoted in Desmond Stewart, *Theodor Herzl* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974), p. 192.

to the Jews in this century. Then too Israel has some remarkable political and cultural achievements to its credit, quite apart from its spectacular military successes until recently. Most important, Israel is a subject about which, on the whole, the Westerner can identify with with less reservations than the ones experienced in thinking about the Arabs who are after all outlandish, strange, hostile Orientals: surely that is an obvious fact to anyone living in the West. Together these successes of Zionism have produced a prevailing view of the question of Palestine that almost totally favors the victor, and takes hardly any account of the victim.

Yet what did the victims feel as they watched the Zionists arriving in Palestine? What do they think as they watch Zionism described today? Where do they look in Zionism's history to locate its roots, and the origins of its practices towards them? These are the questions that are never asked—and they are precisely the ones that I am trying to raise, as well as answer, here in this examination of the links between Zionism and European imperialism. My interest is in trying to record the effects of Zionism on its victims, and these effects can only be studied genealogically in the framework provided by imperialism, even during the nineteenth century when Zionism was still an idea and not a state called Israel. For the Palestinian now who tries critically to see what his or her history has meant, and who tries—as I am now trying—to see what Zionism has been for the Palestinians, Gramsci's observation is relevant: "the consciousness of what one really is . . . is 'knowing thyself' as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory." The job of producing an inventory is a first necessity, Gramsci continued, and so it must be now, when the "inventory" of what Zionism's victims (*not* its beneficiaries) endured is rarely exposed to public view.³¹

If we have become accustomed to making fastidious distinctions between ideology (or theory) and practice, we shall be more accurate historically if we do not do so glibly in the case of the European imperialism that actually annexed most of the world during the nineteenth century. Imperialism was and still is a political philosophy whose aim and purpose for being is territorial expansion and its legitimization. A serious underestimation of imperialism, however, would be to consider territory in too literal a way. Gaining and holding an *imperium* means gaining and holding a domain, which includes a variety of operations, among them constituting an area, accumulating its inhabitants, having power over its ideas, people, and of course, its land, converting people, land, and ideas to the purposes and uses of a hegemonic imperial design, all this as a result of being able to treat reality appropriatively. Thus the distinction between an idea that one *feels* to be one's own, and a piece of land that one claims by right to be one's own (despite the presence on the land of its working native inhabitants) is really non-existent, at least in the world of nineteenth century culture, out of which imperialism developed. Laying claim to an idea and laying claim to a territory—given the extraordinarily current idea that the non-European world was there to be claimed, occupied, and ruled by Europe—were considered to be different sides of the same, essentially constitutive activity, which had the force, the prestige, and the authority of *science*. Moreover, because in such fields as biology, philology, and geology the scientific consciousness was principally a re-constituting, restoring, and transforming activity turning old fields into new ones, the link between an

³¹Antonio Gramsci, *The Prison Notebook: Selections*, trans. and ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), p. 324. The full text is to be found in Gramsci, *Quaderni del Carcere*, ed. Valentino Gerratana (Turin: Einaudi, 1975), 2:1363.

outright imperialist attitude towards distant lands in the Orient and a scientific attitude to the “inequalities” of race was that both attitudes depended on the European *will*, on the determining force necessary to change confusing or useless realities into an orderly, disciplined set of new classifications useful to Europe. Thus in the work of Linnaeus, Buffon, and Cuvier the white race became scientifically different from reds, yellows, blacks, and browns, and consequently, territories occupied by those races also newly became vacant, open to Western colonies, developments, plantations, settlers. Additionally, the less equal races were made useful by being turned into what the white race studied and came to understand as a part of its racial and cultural hegemony, (e.g., Gobineau and Spengler) or, following the impulse of outright colonialism, these lesser races were put to direct use in the Empire. When in 1918 Clemenceau stated that he believed he had “an unlimited right of levying black troops to assist in the defense of French territory in Europe if France were attacked in the future by Germany,” he was saying that by some scientific right France had the knowledge and the power to convert blacks into what Poincaré called an economical form of gunfodder for the white Frenchman.³² Imperialism of course cannot be blamed on science, but what needs to be seen is the relative ease by which science could be deformed into a rationalization for imperial domination.

Supporting the taxonomy of natural history, deformed into a social anthropology whose real purpose was social control, was the taxonomy of linguistics. With the discovery of a structural affinity between groups or families of languages by such linguists as Franz Bopp, William Jones, and Friedrich von Schlegel, there began as well the unwarranted extension of an idea about language families into theories of human types having determined ethno-cultural and racial characteristics. In 1808, as an instance, Schlegel discerned a clear rift between the Indo-Germanic (or Aryan) languages on the one hand, and on the other, the Semitic-African languages. The former he said were creative, regenerative, lively, and aesthetically pleasing; the latter were mechanical in their operations, unregenerate, passive. From this kind of distinction Schlegel himself, and later Renan, went on to generalize about the great distance separating a superior Aryan and an inferior non-Aryan mind, culture, and society.

Perhaps the most effective deformation or translation of science into something more accurately resembling political administration took place in the amorphous field assembling together jurisprudence, social philosophy, and political theory. First of all a fairly influential tradition in philosophic empiricism (recently studied by Harry Bracken³³) seriously advocated a type of racial distinction that divided humankind into lesser and greater breeds of men. The actual problems (in England mainly) of dealing with a 300 year old Indian empire, as well as numerous voyages of discovery, made it possible “scientifically” to show that some cultures were advanced and civilized, others backward and uncivilized; these ideas, plus the lasting social meaning imparted to the fact of color (and hence of race) by philosophers like Locke and Hume, made it axiomatic by the middle of the nineteenth century that Europeans always ought to rule non-Europeans.

This doctrine was reinforced in other ways, some of which had a direct bearing, I think, on Zionist practice and vision in Palestine. Among the supposed juridical distinctions between civilized and non-civilized peoples was an attitude toward land, almost a doxology about land which non-civilized people supposedly lacked. A civilized man, it was believed,

³²See Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1973), p. 129.

³³Bracken, “Essence, Accident and Race,” *Hermetica* 116 (Winter 1973), 81–96.

could cultivate the land because it meant something to him; on it accordingly he bred useful arts and crafts, he created, he accomplished, he built. For an uncivilized people land was either farmed badly (i.e., inefficiently by Western standards) or it was left to rot. From this string of ideas, by which whole native societies who lived on American, African, and Asian territories for centuries were suddenly denied their right to live on that land, came the great dispossessing movements of modern European colonialism, and with them all the schemes for redeeming the land, resettling the natives, civilizing them, taming their savage customs, turning them into useful beings under European rule. Land in Asia, Africa, and the Americas was there for European exploitation, because Europe understood the value of land in a way impossible for the natives. At the end of the century Joseph Conrad dramatized this philosophy in *Heart of Darkness*, and embodied it powerfully in the figure of Kurtz, a man whose colonial dreams for the earth's "dark places" were made by "all Europe." But what Conrad drew on, as indeed the Zionists drew on it also, was the kind of philosophy set forth by Robert Knox in his work *The Dark Races*,³⁴ in which men were divided into white and advanced (the producers) and dark, inferior wasters. Similarly thinkers like John Westlake and before him Emer de Vattel divided the world's territories into empty (though inhabited by nomads, and a low kind of society) and civilized—and the former were then "revised" as being ready for takeover on the basis of a higher, civilized right to them.

I very greatly simplify the transformation in perspective by which millions of acres outside Metropolitan Europe were thus declared empty, their people and societies decreed to be obstacles to progress and development, their space just as assertively declared open to European white settlers and their civilizing exploitation. During the 1870s in particular new European geographical societies mushroomed as a sign that geography had become, according to Lord Curzon, "the most cosmopolitan of all the sciences."³⁵ Not for nothing in *Heart of Darkness* did Marlow admit to his

passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces [populated by natives, that is] on the earth, and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map (but they all look that) I would put my finger on it and say, When I grow up I will go there.³⁶

Geography and a passion for maps developed into an organized matter mainly devoted to acquiring vast overseas territories. And, Conrad also said, this

conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea—something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to ...³⁷

Conrad makes the point better than anyone, I think. The power to conquer territory is only in part a matter of physical force: there is the strong moral and intellectual component making the conquest itself secondary to an idea, which dignifies (and indeed hastens) pure force with arguments drawn from science, morality, ethics, and a general philosophy. Everything in Western culture potentially capable of dignifying the acquisition of new

³⁴See Curtin, *Imperialism*, pp. 93–105, which contains an important extract from Temple's book.

³⁵George Nathaniel Curzon, *Subjects of the Day: Being a Selection of Speeches and Writings* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1915), pp. 155–6.

³⁶Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness in Youth and Two Other Stories* (Garden City: Doubleday, Page, 1925), p. 52.

³⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 50–1.

domains—as a new science, for example, acquires new intellectual territory for itself—*could* be put at the service of colonial adventures. And *was* put, the “idea” always informing the conquest, making it entirely palatable. One example of such an idea spoken about openly as a quite normal justification for what today would be called colonial aggression, is to be found in these passages by Leroi-Beaulieu, a leading French geographer in the 1870s.

A society colonizes, when having itself reached a high degree of maturity and of strength, it procreates, it protects, it places in good conditions of development, and it brings to virility a new society to which it has given birth. Colonization is one of the most complex and delicate phenomena of social psychology.³⁸

There is no question of consulting the natives of the territory where the new society is to be given birth. What counts is that a modern European society has enough vitality and intellect to be “magnified by this pouring out of its exuberant activity on the outside.” Such activity must be good since it is believed in, and since also it carries within itself the healthy current of an entire advanced civilization. Therefore, Leroi-Beaulieu added that

colonization is the expansive force of a people; it is its power of reproduction; it is its enlargement and its multiplication through space; it is the subjugation of the universe or a vast part of it to that people's language, customs, ideas, and laws.

Imperialism was the theory, colonialism the practice, of changing the uselessly unoccupied territories of the world into useful new versions of the European metropolitan society. Everything in those territories that suggested waste, disorder, uncounted resources was to be converted into productivity, order, taxable and potentially developed wealth. You get rid of most of the offending human and animal blight—whether because it simply sprawls untidily all over the place, or because it roams about unproductively and uncounted—you confine the rest to reservations, compounds, native homelands, where you can count, tax, use them profitably, and you build a new society on the vacated space. Thus was Europe reconstituted abroad, its “multiplication in space” successfully projected and managed. The result was a widely varied group of little Europes scattered throughout Asia, Africa, and the Americas, each reflecting the circumstances, the specific instrumentalities of the parent culture, its pioneers, its vanguard settlers.³⁹ All of these were similar in one other major respect—despite the differences, which were considerable—, and that was that their life was carried on with an air of *normality*. The most grotesque reproductions of Europe (South Africa, Rhodesia, etc.) were considered appropriate; the worst discriminations against and exclusions of the natives were thought to be normal because “scientifically” legitimate; the sheer contradiction of living a foreign life in an enclave many physical and cultural miles from Europe, in the midst of hostile and uncomprehending natives, gave rise to a sense of history, a stubborn kind of logic, a social and political state decreeing the present colonial venture as *normal*, justified, good.

These then are the gross points that must be made about the connections between Zionism and European imperialism or colonialism. Whatever it may have done for Jews,

³⁸Agnes Murphy, *The Ideology of French Imperialism* (Washington: Catholic University Press, 1949), pp. 189, 110, 136.

³⁹Amos Oz, a leading Israeli novelist (also considered a “dove”) puts it nicely: “For as long as I live, I shall be thrilled by all those who came to the Promised Land to turn it either into a pastoral paradise or egalitarian Tolstoyan communes, or into a well-educated, middle-class Central European enclave, a replica of Austria and Bavaria. Or those who wanted to raise a Marxist paradise, who built kibbutzim on biblical sites and secretly yearned for Stalin to come one day to admit that ‘Bloody Jews, you have done it better than we did.’” *Time*, May 15, 1978, p. 61.

Zionism essentially saw Palestine as the European imperialist did, as an empty territory; it allied itself, as Chaim Weizmann quite clearly said after World War One, with the imperial powers in carrying out its plans for establishing a new Jewish state in Palestine, and it did not think in terms of “the natives” who were passively supposed to accept the plans made for their land; as even Zionist historians like Porath and Mandell have empirically shown, the idea of Jewish colonizers in Palestine (well before World War One) always met with quite unmistakable native resistance, not because the natives thought that Jews were evil, but because no natives take kindly to having their territory settled by foreigners;⁴⁰ moreover, in formulating the concept of a Jewish nation “reclaiming” its own territory, Zionism not only accepted the generic racial concepts of European culture, it also banked on the fact that Palestine was actually peopled not by an advanced but by a backward people, over which it *ought* to be dominant. Thus that implicit *assumption* of domination led specifically to the practice of ignoring the natives for the most part as not entitled to serious consideration.⁴¹ Zionism therefore developed with a unique consciousness of itself, but with little or nothing left over for the unfortunate natives. Maxime Rodinson is perfectly correct in saying that Zionist indifference to the Palestinian natives was

an indifference linked to European supremacy, which benefited even Europe's proletarians and oppressed minorities. In fact, there can be no doubt that if the ancestral homeland had been occupied by one of the well-established industrialized nations that ruled the world at the time, one that had thoroughly settled down in a territory it had infused with a powerful national consciousness, then the problem of displacing German, French, or English inhabitants and introducing a new, nationally coherent element into the middle of their homeland would have been in the forefront of the consciousness of even the most ignorant and destitute Zionists.⁴²

In short, all the constitutive energies of Zionism were premised on the excluded presence, that is, the functional absence of “native people” in Palestine: institutions were built deliberately shutting out the natives, laws were drafted when Israel came into being that made sure the natives would remain in their “non-place,” Jews in theirs, and so on. It is no wonder that today the one issue that electrifies Israel as a society is the problem of the Palestinians, whose negation is the most consistent thread running through Zionism. And it is this perhaps unfortunate aspect of Zionism that ties it ineluctably to imperialism—at least so far as the Palestinian is concerned. Rodinson again:

The element that made it possible to connect these aspirations of Jewish shopkeepers, peddlers, craftsmen, and intellectuals in Russia and elsewhere to the conceptual orbit of imperialism was one small detail that seemed to be of no importance: Palestine was inhabited by another people.⁴³

III

I have been discussing the extraordinary unevenness in Zionism between care for the Jews and an almost total disregard for the non-Jews or native Arab population in conceptual

⁴⁰See Neville J. Mandell, *The Arabs and Zionism before World War I* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) and Y. Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement 1918–1929* (London: Frank Cass, 1974).

⁴¹See the forthright historical account of this in Amos Elon, *The Israelis: Founders and Sons* (1971, rpt. New York: Bantam, 1972), pp. 218–24.

⁴²Rodinson, *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State?*, op. cit., p. 39.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 38.

terms. Zionism and European imperialism are epistemologically, hence historically and politically, coterminous in their view of resident natives, but it is how this irreducibly imperialist view worked in the world of politics and in the lives of people for whom epistemology was irrelevant that justifies looking at epistemology at all. In that world and in those lives, among them several million Palestinians, the results can be detailed, not as mere theoretical visions, but as an immensely traumatic Zionist effectiveness. One general Arab Palestinian reaction towards Zionism is perfectly caught, I think, in the following sentence written by the Arab delegation's reply in 1922 to Winston Churchill's White Paper: "the intention to create the Jewish National Home is to cause the disappearance or subordination of the Arabic population, culture and language."⁴⁴ What generations of Palestinian Arabs watched therefore was an unfolding design, whose deeper roots in Jewish history and the terrible Jewish experience was necessarily obscured by what was taking place before their eyes and to them in Palestine. There the Arabs were able to see embodied,

a ruthless doctrine, calling for monastic self-discipline and cold detachment from environment. The Jews who gloried in the name of socialist worker interpreted brotherhood on a strictly nationalist, or racial basis, for they meant brotherhood with Jew, not with Arab. As they insisted on working the soil with their own hands, since exploitation of others was anathema to them, they excluded the Arabs from their regime. . . . They believed in equality, but for themselves. They lived on Jewish bread, raised on Jewish soil that was protected by a Jewish rifle.⁴⁵

The "inventory" of Palestinian experience that I am trying to take here is based on the simple truth that the exultant or (later) the terrorized Jews who arrived in Palestine were seen essentially as foreigners whose proclaimed destiny was to create a state for Jews. What of the Arabs who were there, was the question we must feel ourselves asking now? What we will discover is that everything positive from the Zionist standpoint looked absolutely negative from the perspective of the native Arab Palestinians.

For they could never be fit into the grand vision. Not that "vision" was merely a theoretical matter: it was that and, as it was later to determine the character and even the detail of Israeli government policy towards the native Arab Palestinians; "vision" was also the way Zionist leaders looked at the Arabs in order later (or perhaps at that moment) to deal with them. Thus, as I said earlier, I have in mind the whole dialectic between theory and actual day-to-day practice that determined and produced victorious Zionist effectiveness. My premise is that Israel developed as a social polity out of the Zionist thesis that Palestine's colonization was to be accomplished simultaneously for and by Jews, and by the displacement of the Palestinians; moreover, that in its conscious and declared ideas about Palestine Zionism attempted first to minimize, then to eliminate, then all else failing, finally to subjugate the natives as a way of guaranteeing that Israel would not be simply the state of its citizens (which included Arabs of course) but the state of the whole Jewish people, having a kind of sovereignty over land and peoples that no other state possessed or possesses. It is this anomaly that in their frequently ineffective ways the Arab Palestinians have since been trying both to resist and provide an alternative for.

One can learn a great deal from pronouncements made by strategically important Zionist leaders whose job it was, after Herzl, to translate the design into action. Chaim Weizmann comes to mind at once, as much for his extraordinary personality as for his

⁴⁴Quoted in David Waines, "The Failure of the Nationalist Resistance," in *The Transformation of Palestine*, op. cit., p. 220.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 213.

brilliant successes in bringing Zionism up from an idea to a conquering political institution. His thesis about the land of Palestine is revealing in the extent to which it repeats Herzl:

It seems as if God has covered the soil of Palestine with rocks and marshes and sand, so that its real beauty can only be brought out by those who love it and will devote their lives to healing its wounds.⁴⁶

The context of this remark, however, is a sale made to the Zionists by a wealthy absentee landlord (the Lebanese Sursuk family) of unpromising marsh land. Weizmann admits that this particular sale was of *some*, by no means a great deal, of Palestine, yet the impression he gives is of a whole territory essentially unused, unappreciated, misunderstood (if one can use such a word in this connection). Despite the people who lived on it Palestine was therefore *to be made* useful, appreciated, understandable. The native inhabitants were believed curiously to be out of touch with history and, it seemed to follow, they were not really present. In the following passage written by Weizmann to describe Palestine when he first visited there in 1907, notice how the contrast between past neglect and forlornness, and present “tone and progressive spirit” (he was writing in 1941) is intended to justify the introduction of foreign colonies and settlements.

A dolorous country it was on the whole, one of the most neglected corners of the miserably neglected Turkish Empire. [Here, Weizmann uses “neglect” to describe Palestine’s native inhabitants, the fact of whose residence there is not a sufficient reason to characterize Palestine as anything but an essentially empty and patient territory, awaiting people who show a proper care for it.] Its total population was something above six hundred thousand, of which about eighty thousand were Jews. The latter lived mostly in the cities. . . . But neither the colonies nor the city settlements in any way resembled, as far as vigor, tone and progressive spirit are concerned, the colonies and settlements of our day.⁴⁷

One short term gain was that Zionism “raised the value of the ... land” (253), and the Arabs could reap profits even if politically the land was being cut out from underneath them.

As against native neglect and decrepitude, Weizmann preached the necessity of Jewish energy, will, and organization for reclaiming, “redeeming” the land. His language was shot through with the rhetoric of voluntarism, with an ideology of will and new blood that appropriated for Zionism a great deal of the language (and later the policies) of European colonialists attempting to deal with native backwardness. “New blood had to be brought into the country; a new spirit of enterprise had to be introduced.” The Jews were to be the importers of colonies and colonists whose role was not simply to take over a territory but also to be schools for a Jewish national self-revival. Thus if in Palestine “there were great possibilities” the question became how to do something about the fact that “the will was lacking. How was that to be awakened? How was a cumulative process to be set in motion?” According to Weizmann, the Zionists were saved from ultimate discouragement only because of “our feeling that a great source of energy was waiting to be tapped—the national impulse of a people held in temporary check by a misguided interpretation of historic method.”⁴⁸ The “method” referred to was the Zionist tendency hitherto to rely on great foreign benefactors like the Rothschilds and “neglect” the development of self-sustaining colonial institutions on the land itself.

⁴⁶*Trial and Error: The Autobiography of Chaim Weizmann* (New York: Harper, 1959), p. 371.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 128–9.

To do this it was necessary to visualize and then to implement a scheme for creating a network of realities—a language, a grid of colonies, a series of organizations—for converting Palestine from its present state of “neglect” into a Jewish state. This network would not so much attack the existing “realities” as ignore them, grow alongside them, and then finally blot them out, as a forest of large trees blots out a small garden. A main ideological necessity for such a program was acquiring legitimacy for it, giving it an archeology and a teleology that completely surrounded and, in a sense, outdated the native culture that was still firmly planted in Palestine. One of the reasons Weizmann modified the conception of the Balfour Declaration from its favoring the establishment of a Jewish National Home to favoring a “re-establishment” was precisely to enclose the territory with the oldest and farthest reaching of possible “realities.” The colonization of Palestine proceeded always as a fact of repetition: the Jews were not supplanting, destroying, breaking up a native society. That society was itself the oddity that had broken the pattern of a 60 year Jewish sovereignty over Palestine which had lapsed for two millenia. In Jewish hearts, however, Israel had always been there, an actuality difficult for the natives to perceive. Zionism therefore reclaimed, redeemed, repeated, replanted, realized Palestine, and Jewish hegemony over it. Israel was a return to a previous state of affairs, even if the new facts bore a much greater resemblance to the methods and the successes of nineteenth century European colonialism than to some mysterious first century forebears.

Here it is necessary to make something very clear. In each of the projects for “re-establishing” Jewish sovereignty over Palestine there were always two fundamental components. One was a studied determination to implement Jewish self-betterment. About this of course the world heard a great deal. Great steps were taken in providing Jews with a new sense of identity, in defending and giving them rights as citizens, in reviving a national “home” language (through the labors of Elizer ben Yehudah), in giving the whole Jewish world a vital sense of growth and historical density. Thus “there was an instrument [in Zionism] for them to turn to, an instrument which could absorb them into the new life.”⁴⁹ For Jews Zionism was a school—and its pedagogical philosophy was always clear, dramatic, intelligent. Yet the other dialectically opposite component in Zionism existing at its interior where it was never *seen* (even though directly experienced by Palestinians) was an equally firm and intelligent boundary between benefits for Jews and none (later, punishment) for non-Jews.

The consequences of the bifurcation in the Zionist program for Palestine have been immense, especially for Arabs who have tried seriously to deal with Israel. So effective have Zionist ideas about Palestine been for Jews—in the sense of caring for Jews and ignoring non-Jews—that what these ideas *expressed* to Arabs was *only* a rejection of Arabs. Thus Israel itself has tended to appear as an entirely negative entity, something constructed for us for no other reason than to keep Arabs out or to subjugate them. The internal solidity and cohesion of Israel, of Israelis as a people and as a society, have for the most part therefore eluded the understanding of Arabs generally. Thus, to the walls constructed by Zionism have been added walls constructed by a dogmatic, almost theological brand of Arabism. Israel has seemed essentially to be a rhetorical tool provided by the West to harass the Arabs. What this entailed in the Arab states has been a policy of repression and a kind of thought control. For years it was forbidden ever to refer to Israel in print; this sort of censorship led quite naturally to the consolidation of police states, the absence of freedom of expression, and a whole set of human rights’ abuses, all supposedly justified in the name

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 128.

of “fighting Zionist aggression,” which meant that any form of oppression at home was acceptable because it served the “sacred cause” of “national security.”

For Israel and Zionists everywhere the results of Zionist *apartheid* have been equally disastrous. The Arabs were seen as synonymous with everything degraded, fearsome, irrational, and brutal. Institutions whose humanistic and social (even socialist) inspiration were manifest for Jews—e.g., the Kibbutz, Law of Return, various facilities for the acculturation of immigrants—were precisely, determinedly inhuman for the Arabs. In his body and being, and in the putative emotions and psychology assigned to him, the Arab expressed whatever stood outside, beyond Zionism.

The denial of Israel by the Arabs was, I think, a far less sophisticated and complex thing than the denial, later the minimization of the Arabs by Israel. Zionism was not only a reproduction of nineteenth century European colonialism, for all the community of ideas it shared with that colonialism. Zionism aimed to create a society that could never be anything but “native” (with minimal ties to a metropolitan center) at the same time that it determined not to come to terms with the very natives it was replacing with new “natives.” Such a substitution was to be absolutely economical: no slippage from Arab Palestinian to Israeli societies would occur, and the Arabs would remain, if they did not flee, only as docile, subservient objects. And everything that did stay to challenge Israel was viewed not as something *there*, but as a sign of something *outside* Israel and Zionism bent on its destruction—from the outside. Here Zionism literally took over the typology employed by European culture of a fearsome Orient confronting the Occident, except that Zionism, as an avant-garde redemptive Occidental movement, confronted the Orient *in* the Orient. To look at what “fulfilled” Zionism had to say about the Arabs generally, and Palestinians in particular, is to see something like the following, extracted from an article printed in *Ma’ariv*, October 7, 1955. Its author was Dr. A. Carlebach, who was a distinguished citizen, not a crude demagogue. His argument is that *Islam* opposes Zionism although he does find room in his argument for the Palestinians.

These Arab Islamic countries do not suffer from poverty, or disease, or illiteracy, or exploitation; they only suffer from the worst of all plagues: Islam. Wherever Islamic psychology rules, there is the inevitable rule of despotism and criminal aggression. The danger lies in Islamic psychology, which cannot integrate itself into the world of efficiency and progress, that lives in a world of illusions, perturbed by attacks of inferiority complexes and megalomania, lost in the dreams of the holy sword. The danger stems from the totalitarian conception of the world, the passion for murder deeply rooted in their blood, from the lack of logic, the easily inflamed brains, the boasting, and above all: the blasphemous disregard for all that is sacred to the civilized world . . . their reactions—to anything—have nothing to do with plain good sense. They are all emotional, unbalanced, instantaneous, senseless. It is always the lunatic that speaks from their throat. You can talk “business” with everyone, and even with the devil. But not with Allah. . . . This is what every grain in this country shouts. There were many great cultures here and invaders of all kinds. All of them—even the Crusaders—left signs of culture and blossoming. But on the path of Islam, even the trees have died. [This dovetails perfectly with Weizmann’s observations about “neglect” in Palestine; one assumes that had Weizmann been writing later he would have said similar things to Carlebach.]

We pile sin upon crime when we distort the picture and reduce the discussion to a conflict of borders between Israel and her neighbors. First of all, it is not the truth. The heart of the conflict is not the question of borders; it is the question of Muslim psychology. . . . Moreover, to present the problem as a conflict between two similar parts is to provide the Arabs with the weapon of a claim that is not theirs. If the discussion with them is truly a political one, then it can be seen from both

sides. Then we appear as those who came to a country that was entirely Arab, and we conquered and implanted ourselves as an alien body among them, and we loaded them with refugees and constitute a military danger for them, etc., etc. . . . one can justify this or that side—and such a presentation, sophisticated and political, of the problem is understandable for European minds—at our expense. The Arabs raise claims that make sense to the Western understanding of simple legal dispute. But in reality, who knows better than us that such is not the source of their hostile stand? All those political and social concepts are never theirs. Occupation by force of arms, in their own eyes, in the eyes of Islam, is not at all associated with injustice. To the contrary, it constitutes a certificate and demonstration of authentic ownership. The sorrow for the refugees, for the expropriated brothers, has no room in their thinking. Allah expelled, Allah will care. Never has a Muslim politician been moved by such things (unless, indeed, the catastrophe endangered his personal status). If there were no refugees and no conquest, they would oppose us just the same. By discussing with them on the basis of Western concepts, we dress savages in a European robe of justice.

Israeli studies of “Arab attitudes”—such as the canonical one by General Harkaby⁵⁰—take no notice of such analyses as this, which is more magical and racist than anything one is likely to encounter by a Palestinian. But the dehumanization of the Arab, which began with the view that Palestinians were either not there or savages, or both, saturates everything in Israeli society. It was not thought too unusual during the 1973 war for the Army to issue a booklet (with a preface by General Yona Efrati of the Central Command) written by the Central Command’s Rabbi, Abraham Avidan, containing the following key passage:

When our forces encounter civilians during the war or in the course of a pursuit or a raid, the encountered civilians may, and by Halachic standards even must be killed, whenever it cannot be ascertained that they are incapable of hitting us back. Under no circumstances should an Arab be trusted, even if he gives the impression of being civilized.⁵¹

Children’s literature is made up of valiant Jews who always end up killing low treacherous Arabs, with names like Mastoul (crazy), Bandura (tomato), or Bukra (tomorrow). As a writer for *Ha’aretz* said (Sept. 20, 1974) children’s books “deal with our topic: the Arab who murders Jews out of pleasure, and the pure Jewish boy who defeats ‘the coward swine!’” Nor are such enthusiastic ideas limited to individual authors who produce books for mass consumption; as I hope later to show, these ideas derive more or less logically from the state’s institutions, whose other, benevolent side has the task of regulating Jewish life humanistically.

There are perfect illustrations of this duality in Weizmann for whom such matters immediately found their way into policy, action, and detailed results. He admires Samuel Pevsner as “a man of great ability, energetic, practical, resourceful and, like his wife, highly educated.” One can have no problem with this. Then immediately comes the following, without so much as a transition. “For such people, going to Palestine was in effect going into a social wilderness—which is something to be remembered by those who, turning to

⁵⁰Y. Harkaby, *Arab Attitudes to Israel* (Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1972). Harkaby was Chief of Military Intelligence until he was dismissed in 1959 by Ben Gurion. He later became a professor at the Hebrew University, and an expert Arabist, indeed the principal propagandist in Israel against everything Arab and/or especially Palestinian. See, for example, his virulently anti-Palestinian book (distributed gratis in this country by the Israeli embassy) *Palestinians and Israel* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1974). And yet surprisingly General Harkaby has recently become a dove, and a supporter of the *Peace Now* movement.

⁵¹Reproduced in *Haolam Hazeh*, May 15, 1974. The editor of *Haolam Hazeh*, Uri Avnery has written an interesting, somewhat demagogic book, worth looking at for the light it sheds on Israeli politics: *Israel Without Zionists: A Plea for Peace in the Middle East* (New York: Macmillan, 1968). It contains some vitriolic attacks on people like Moshe Dayan, whom Avnery describes essentially as “an Arab-fighter” (cf. Indian fighters in the American West).

Palestine today, find in it intellectual cultural and social resources not inferior to those of the Western world.”⁵² Zionism was all foregrounding; everything else was background, and it had to be subdued, suppressed, lowered in order that the foreground of cultural achievement could appear as “civilizing pioneer work.”⁵³ Above all, the native Arab had to be seen as an irremediable opposite, something like a combination of savage and superhuman, at any rate a being with whom it is impossible (and useless) to come to terms.

The Arab is a very subtle debator and conversationalist—much more so than the average educated European—and until one has acquired the technique one is at a great disadvantage. In particular, the Arab has an immense talent for expressing views diametrically opposed to yours with such exquisite and roundabout politeness that you believe him to be in complete agreement with you, and ready to join hands with you at once. Conversation and negotiations with Arabs are not unlike chasing a mirage in the desert: full of promise and good to look at, but likely to lead to death by thirst.

A direct question is dangerous: it provokes in the Arab a skillful withdrawal and a complete change of subject. The problem must be approached by winding lanes, and it takes an interminable time to reach the kernel of the subject.⁵⁴

On another occasion, he recounts an experience which in effect was the germ of Tel Aviv, whose importance as a Jewish center derives in great measure from its having neutralized the adjacent (and much older) Arab town of Jaffa. In what Weizmann tells the reader, however, there is only the slightest allusion to the fact of Arab life already existing there, on what was to be the adjacent future site of Tel Aviv. What matters is the production of a Jewish presence, whose value appears to be more or less self-evident.

I was staying in Jaffa when Ruppin called on me, and took me out for a walk over the dunes to the north of the town. When we had got well out into the sands—I remember that it came over our ankles—he stopped, and said, very solemnly: “Here we shall create a Jewish city!” I looked at him with some dismay. Why should people come to live out in this wilderness where nothing could grow? I began to ply him with technical questions, and he answered me carefully and exactly. Technically, he said, everything is possible. Though in the first years communication with the new settlement would be difficult, the inhabitants would soon become self-supporting and self-sufficient. The Jews of Jaffa would move into the new, modern city, and the Jewish colonies of the neighborhood would have a concentrated market for their products. The Gymnasium would stand at the center, and would attract a great many students from other parts of Palestine and from Jews abroad, who would want their children to be educated in a Jewish high school in a Jewish city.

Thus it was Ruppin who had the first vision of Tel Aviv, which was destined to outstrip, in size and in economic importance, the ancient town of Jaffa, and to become one of the metropolitan centers of the eastern Mediterranean.⁵⁵

In time of course the pre-eminence of Tel Aviv was to be buttressed by the military capture of Jaffa. The visionary project later turned into the first step of a military conquest, the idea of a colony being later fleshed out in the actual appearance of a colony, of colonizers, and of the colonized.

Weizmann and Ruppin, it is true spoke and acted with the passionate idealism of pioneers; they also were speaking and acting with the authority of Westerners surveying fundamentally retarded non-Western territory and natives, planning the future *for them*. Weizmann himself did not just think that as a European he was better equipped to decide for

⁵²*Trial and Error*, p. 130.

⁵³*Ibid.*, p. 188.

⁵⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 215–6.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, p. 130.

the natives what their best interests were (e.g., that Jaffa *ought to be* outstripped by a modern Jewish city), he also believed he “understood” the Arab *as he really was*. In saying that the Arab’s “immense talent” was “in fact” for never telling the truth, he said what other Europeans had observed about non-European natives elsewhere, for whom, like the Zionists, the problem was controlling a large native majority with a comparative handful of intrepid pioneers:

It may well be asked how it is that we are able to control, with absurdly inadequate forces, races so virile and capable, with such mental and physical endowments. The reply is, I think, that there are two flaws to be found:—the mental and moral equipment of the average African. . . . I say that inherent lack of honesty is the first great flaw. . . . Comparatively rarely can one African depend upon another keeping his word. . . . Except in very rare instances it is a regrettable fact that this defect is enlarged rather than diminished by contact with European civilization. The second is lack of mental initiative. . . . Unless impelled from the outside the native seldom branches out from a recognized groove and this mental lethargy is characteristic of his mind.⁵⁶

This is C.L. Temple’s *Native Races and Their Rulers* (1918); its author was an assistant to Lugard in governing Nigeria and like Weizmann he was less a proto-Nazi racist than a liberal Fabian in his outlook.

For Temple as for Weizmann the realities were that natives belonged to a stationary, stagnant culture. Incapable therefore of appreciating the land they lived on, they had to be prodded, perhaps even dislocated by the initiatives of an advanced European culture. Now certainly Weizmann had the additional rationalizations behind him of reconstituting a Jewish state and saving Jews from anti-Semitism. But so far as the natives were concerned it could not have mattered initially whether the Europeans they faced in the colony were Englishmen or European Jews. As for the Zionist in Palestine or the Britisher in Africa, he was realistic, he saw facts and dealt with them, he knew the value of truth. Notwithstanding the “fact” of long residence on a native territory, the non-European was always in retreat from truth. European vision meant the capacity to see not only what was there, but what *could* be there: hence the Weizmann-Ruppin exchange about Jaffa and Tel Aviv. The specific temptation before the Zionist in Palestine was to believe—and plan for—the possibility that the Arab natives would not *really* be there, which was doubtless a proven eventuality (a) when the natives would not acknowledge Jewish sovereignty over Palestine and (b) when after 1948 they became legal outsiders on their land.

But the success of Zionism did not derive exclusively from its bold outlining of a future state, or from its ability to see the natives for the negligible quantities they were or might become. Rather, I think, Zionism’s effectiveness in making its way against Arab Palestinian resistance to it lay *in its being a policy of detail*, not simply a general colonial vision. Thus Palestine was not only the Promised Land, a concept as elusive and as abstract as any that one could encounter. It was a specific territory with specific characteristics, that was surveyed down to the last millimeter, settled on, planned for, built on, and so forth—*in detail*. From the beginning of the Zionist colonization this was something the Arabs had no answer to, no equally detailed counter-proposal. They assumed that since they lived on the land and legally owned it, that it was therefore theirs. They did not understand that what they were encountering was a discipline of detail—indeed, a very culture of discipline by detail—by which a hitherto imaginary realm could be constructed on Palestine, inch by inch and step by step. The Palestinian Arabs always opposed a *general* policy on general principles: Zionism, they said, was foreign colonialism (which strictly speaking it was, as the

⁵⁶Temple, *The Native Races and Their Rulers* (rprt. London: Frank Cass, 1968), p. 41.

early Zionists admitted), it was unfair to the natives (as some early Zionists, like Aha-d Ha'am also admitted), and it was doomed to die of its various theoretical weaknesses. Even to this day the Palestinian political position generally clusters around these negatives, and still does not sufficiently try to meet the detail of Zionist enterprise. It has not understood that Zionism has been much more than an unfair colonialist master against whom one could appeal to all sorts of higher courts, without any avail. It has not understood the Zionist challenge as a policy of detail, of institutions, of organization, by which people (to this day) enter territory illegally, build houses on it, settle there, and call the land their own—with the whole world condemning them. The force of that drive to settle, in a sense *to produce* a Jewish land can be glimpsed in a document that Weizmann says “seemed to have anticipated the shape of things to come” as indeed it did. This was an “Outline of Program for the Jewish Resettlement of Palestine in Accordance with the Aspirations of the Zionist Movement”; it appeared in early 1917, and it is worth quoting.

The Suzerain Government [that is, any government, Allied or otherwise, in command of the territory,] shall sanction a formation of a Jewish company for the colonization of Palestine by Jews. The said Company shall be under the direct protection of the Suzerain Government [that is, whatever went on in Palestine should be legitimized not by the natives but by some outside force]. The objects of the Company shall be: (a) to support and foster the existing Jewish settlement in Palestine in every possible way; (b) to aid, support and encourage Jews from other countries who are desirous of and suitable for settling in Palestine by organizing immigration, by providing information, and by every other form of material and moral assistance. The powers of the Company shall be such as will enable it to develop the country in every way, agricultural, cultural, commercial and industrial, and shall include full powers of land purchase and development, and especially facilities for the acquisition of the Crown lands, building rights for roads, railways harbors, power to establish shipping companies for the transport of goods and passengers to and from Palestine, and for every other power found necessary for the opening of the country.⁵⁷

Underlying this extraordinary passage is a vision of a matrix of organizations whose functioning duplicates that of an army. For it is an army that “opens” a country to settlement, that organizes settlements in foreign territory, that aids and develops “in every possible way” such matters as immigration, shipping, supply, that above all turns mere citizens into “suitable” disciplined agents whose job is to be on the land and to invest it with their structures, organization, and institutions.⁵⁸ Just as an army assimilates ordinary citizens to its purposes—by dressing them in uniforms, by exercising them in tactics and maneuvers, by disciplining everyone to its purposes—so too did Zionism dress the Jewish colonists in the system of Jewish labor and Jewish land, whose uniform required that only Jews were acceptable. The power of the Zionist army did not reside in its leaders, nor in the arms it collected for its conquests and defense, but rather in the functioning of a whole system, a series of positions taken and held as Weizmann says, in agriculture, culture, commerce, and industry. In short Zionism’s “company” was the translation of a theory and a vision into a set of instruments for holding and developing a Jewish colonial territory right in the middle of an indifferently surveyed and developed Arab territory.

The fascinating history of the Zionist colonial apparatus, its “company,” cannot long detain us here, but at least some things about its workings need to be noted. The Second

⁵⁷*Trial and Error*, pp. 156–7.

⁵⁸On the army as a matrix for organizing society, see Michel Foucault, “Questions à Michel Foucault sur la géographie,” *Hérodote*, 1, 1 (1976), p. 85. See also Yves Lacoste, *La Géographie, ça sert, d'abord, à faire la guerre* (Paris: Maspéro, 1976).

Zionist Congress meeting in Basel (August 1898) created the Jewish Colonial Trust Limited, a subsidiary of which was founded in Jaffa in 1903 and called the Anglo-Palestine Company. Thus began an agency whose role in the transformation of Palestine was extraordinarily crucial. Out of the Colonial Trust in 1901 came the Jewish National Fund, empowered to buy land and hold it in trust for “the Jewish people”: the wording of the original proposal was that the JNF would be “a trust for the Jewish people, which . . . can be used exclusively for the purchase of land in Palestine and Syria.” The JNF was always under the control of the World Zionist Organization, and in 1905 the first land purchases were made.

From its inception as a functioning body the JNF existed either to develop, buy, or lease land—only for Jews. As Walter Lehn convincingly shows (in a major piece of research on the JNF, on which I have relied for the details I mention here⁵⁹), the Zionist goal was to acquire land in order to put settlers on it; thus in 1920, after the Palestine Land Development Company had been founded as an agency of the JNF, a Palestine Foundation Fund was created to organize immigration and colonization. At the same time emphasis was placed institutionally on acquiring and holding lands for “the Jewish people.” This designation made it certain that a Zionist state would be unlike any other state in that it was not to be the state of its citizens, but rather the state of a whole people most of which was in Diaspora. Aside from making the non-Jewish people of the state into second-class citizens, it made the Zionist organizations, and later the state, retain a large extra-territorial power in addition to the vital territorial possessions over which the state was to have sovereignty. Even the land acquired by the JNF was—as John Hope Simpson said in 1930—“extraterritorialized. It ceases to be land from which the Arab can gain any advantage either now or at any time in the future.” There was no corresponding Arab effort to institutionalize Arab land-holding in Palestine, no thought that it might be necessary to create an organization for holding lands “in perpetuity” for the “Arab people,” above all, no informational, money-raising, lobbying work done—as the Zionists did in Europe and the United States—to expand “Jewish” territory and, paradoxically, give it a Jewish presence and an international, almost metaphysical status as well. The Arabs mistakenly thought that owning the land and being on it were enough.

Even with all this sophisticated and far-sighted effort, the JNF acquired only 936,000 dunums in the almost half century of its existence before Israel appeared as a state (the total land area of Mandate Palestine was 26,323,000 dunums). Together with the small amount of land held by private Jewish owners, Zionist landholding in Palestine at the end of 1947 was 1,734,000 dunums, that is, 6.59% of the total area. After 1940, when the Mandatory authority restricted Jewish land ownership to specific zones inside Palestine, there continued to be illegal buying (and selling) within the 65% of the total area restricted to Arabs. Thus when the Partition plan was announced in 1947 it included land held illegally by Jews, which was incorporated as a *fait accompli* inside the borders of the Jewish state. And after Israel announced its statehood an impressive series of laws assimilated huge tracts of Arab land (whose proprietors had become refugees, and were pronounced “absentee

⁵⁹Details taken from Walter Lehn, “The Jewish National Fund,” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, III, 4 (Summer 1974), 74–96. It is worth noting here that during the academic year 1977–8 Lehn, a retired professor of linguistics, was visiting professor at Bir Zeit University, the only Arab institution of higher learning on the occupied West Bank. During the year he continued his research on the JNF, and also signed an open letter on January 6 protesting (as an eye witness) the savage beating of two young Palestinian students by Israeli soldiers (one of the two was hospitalized after he collapsed from the beating). Along with six other professors Lehn was denied a work permit by the West Bank military authorities in early May 1978. Not one US newspaper carried news of this.

landlords” in order to expropriate their lands and prevent their return under any circumstances) to the JNF. The process of land alienation (from the Arab standpoint) had been completed.

The ideological, profoundly political meaning of the “company’s” territorial achievements illuminates the post-1967 controversy over the fate of Arab land occupied by Israel. A large segment of the Israeli population seems to believe that Arab land can be converted into Jewish land (a) because the land had once been Jewish two millenia ago (a part of Eretz Israel) and (b) because there exists in the JNF a method for legally metamorphosing “neglected” land into the property of the Jewish people.⁶⁰ Once Jewish settlements are built and peopled, and once they are hooked into the state network, they become properly extraterritorial, emphatically Jewish and non-Arab. To this new land is added as well a strategic rationale, that it is necessary for Israeli security. But were these simply matters of internal Israeli concern, and were they sophisticated arguments intended only to appeal to an Israeli constituency, they might be analyzed dispassionately as being no more than curious. The fact is, however, that they impinge—as they always have—on the Arab residents of the territories, and as such they have a distinct cutting edge to them. Both in theory and in practice their effectiveness lies in how they Judaize territory coterminously with de-Arabizing it.

There is privileged evidence for this, I think, in what Joseph Weitz had to say. From 1932 on Weitz was the Director of the Jewish National Land Fund; in 1965 his diaries and papers, *My Diary, and Letters to the Children*, were published in Israel. On December 19, 1940 he wrote:

... after the [Second World] war the question of the land of Israel and the question of the Jews would be raised beyond the framework of “development”; amongst ourselves. *It must be clear that there is no room for both peoples in this country.* No “development” will bring us closer to our aim, to be an independent people in this small country. If the Arabs leave the country, it will be broad and wide-open for us. And if the Arabs stay, the country will remain narrow and miserable. When the War is over and the English have won, and when the judges sit on the throne of Law, our people must bring their petitions and their claim before them; and the only solution is Eretz Israel, or at least Western Eretz Israel, *without Arabs. There is no room for compromise on this point!* The Zionist enterprise so far, in terms of preparing the ground and paving the way for the creation of the Hebrew State in the land of Israel, has been fine and good in its own time, and could do with “land-buying”—but this will not bring about the State of Israel; that must come all at once, in the manner of a Salvation (this is the secret of the Messianic idea); and there is no way besides transferring the Arabs from here to the neighboring countries, *to transfer them all*; except maybe for Bethlehem, Nazareth and Old Jerusalem, *we must not leave a single village, not a single tribe.* And the transfer must be directed to Iraq, to Syria, and even to Transjordan. For that purpose we’ll find money, and a lot of money. And only with such a transfer will the country be able to absorb millions of our brothers, and the Jewish question shall be solved, once and for all. There is no other way out.⁶¹ (Emphases added)

⁶⁰As an example consider the fate of Umm al-Fahm, a large Arab village given to Israel by King Abdallah in 1949 according to the Rhodes agreement. Before 1948 the village owned 140,000 dunums, with a population of 5,000. In 1978 there are about 20,000 Arab inhabitants of Umm al-Fahm but the village’s land has been reduced to 15,000 dunums, almost all of them rocky and poor for cultivation. All the best land was confiscated by various “legal” decrees, including the 1953 Law of Land, Insurance and Compensation. The greatest irony perhaps is that two socialist kibbutzim—Meguido and Givat Oz—were built on the confiscated Arab land. What was left was turned over to a *moshav*.

⁶¹Weitz, *My Diary*, Vol. II, pp. 181–2.

These are not only prophetic remarks about what was going to happen; they are also policy statements, in which Weitz spoke with the voice of the Zionist consensus. There were literally hundreds of such statements made by Zionists beginning with Herzl, and when “salvation” came it was with those ideas in mind that the conquest of Palestine, and the eviction of its Arabs was carried out. A great deal has been written about the turmoil in Palestine from the end of World War Two until the end of 1948. Despite the complexities of what may or may not have taken place Weitz’s thoughts furnish a real beam of light shining through those events, pointing to a Jewish state with most of the original Arab inhabitants turned into refugees. It is true that such major events as the birth of a new state, which came about as the result of an almost unimaginably complex many-sided struggle and a full-scale war, cannot be easily reduced to simple formulation. I have no wish to do this, but neither do I wish to evade the outcome of struggle, or the determining elements that went into the struggle, or even the policies produced in Israel ever since. The fact that matters for the Palestinian—and for the Zionist—is that a territory once full of Arabs emerged from a war (a) essentially emptied of its original residents and (b) made impossible for Palestinians to return to. Both the ideological and organizational preparations for the Zionist effort to win Palestine, as well as the military strategy adopted, envisioned taking over territory, and filling it with new inhabitants. Thus the Dalet plan, as it has been described by the Zionist historians Jon and David Kimche, was “to capture strategic heights dominating the most likely lines of advance of the invading Arab armies, and to fill in the vacuum left by the departing British forces in such a way as to create a contiguous Jewish-held area extending from the north to the south.”⁶² In places like Galilee, the coastal area from Jaffa to Acre, parts of Jerusalem, the towns of Lydda and Ramleh, to say nothing of the Arab parts of Haifa, the Zionists were not only taking over British positions; they were also filling in space lived in by Arab residents who were, in Weitz’s words, being “transferred.”

Against the frequently mentioned propositions—that Palestinians left because they were ordered to by their leaders, that the invading Arab armies were an unwarranted response to Israel’s declaration of independence in May 1948—I must say categorically that *no one has produced any evidence of such orders sufficient to produce so vast and so final an exodus.*⁶³ In other words, if we wish to understand why 780,000 Palestinians left in 1948 we must shift our sights to take in more than the immediate events of 1948: we must see the exodus as being produced by a complete lack of Palestinian political, organizational response to Zionist effectiveness, and along with that, a psychological mood of failure and terror. Certainly atrocities such as the Deir Yassin massacre of 250 Arab civilians by Menachem Begin and his Irgun terrorists in April 1948 had their effect. But for all its horror even Deir Yassin was but one of many such massacres which began in the immediate post-World War One period, and which produced conscious Zionist equivalents of American

⁶²Kimche, *A Clash of Destinies: The Arab-Jewish War and the Founding of the State of Israel* (New York: Praeger, 1960), p. 92. See also the two important articles by Walid Khalidi, “The Fall of Haifa,” *Middle East Forum*, XXXV, 10 (December 1959), pp. 22–32; and “Plan Dalet: The Zionist Blueprint for the Conquest of Palestine,” *Middle East Forum*, XXXVII, 9 (November 1961), pp. 22–28.

⁶³The most thorough study ever done of the Palestinian exodus after a combing of every Arab newspaper and news broadcast of the period revealed absolutely no evidence of “orders to leave,” or of anything except urgings to Palestinians to remain in their country. Unfortunately the terror was too great for a mostly unarmed population. See Erskine Childers, “The Wordless Wish: From Citizens to Refugees,” in *The Transformation of Palestine*, ed. Abu-Lughod, pp. 165–202. At the time he did the study Childers was a free-lance Irish journalist: his findings are devastating to the Zionist case.

Indian killers.⁶⁴ What probably counted more has been the machinery for keeping the unarmed civilian Palestinians away, once they had moved (in most cases) to avoid the brutalities of war. Before they left, and after, there were specific Zionist instrumentalities for, in effect, obliterating their presence. I have already cited Weitz in 1940. Here he is on May 28, 1948, narrating a conversation with Moshe Shertok (later Sharett) of the Foreign Ministry:

Transfer—*post factum*; should we do something so as to transform the exodus of the Arabs from the country into a fact, so that they return no more? . . . His [Shertok's] answer: he blesses any initiative in this matter. His opinion is also that we must act in such a way as to transform the exodus of the Arabs into an established fact. . . .⁶⁵

Later that year Weitz visited an evacuated Arab village. He reflected as follows:

I went to visit the village of Mu'ar. Three tractors are completing its destruction. I was surprised; nothing in me moved at the sight of the destruction. No regret and no hate, as though this was the way the world goes. So we want to feel good in this world, and not in some world to come. We simply want to live, and the inhabitants of those mud-houses did not want us to exist here. They not only aspire to dominate us, they also wanted to exterminate us. And what is interesting—this is the opinion of all our boys, from one end to the other.⁶⁶

He describes something that took place everywhere in Palestine but he seems totally unable to take in the fact that the human lives—very modest and humble ones it is true—actually lived in that wretched village meant something to the poor people whose lives they were. Weitz does not attempt to deny the villagers' reality: he simply admits that their destruction means only that "we" can now live there. He is completely untroubled by the thought that to the native Palestinians he, Weitz, is only a foreigner come to displace them, or that it is no more than natural to oppose such a prospect. Instead Weitz and "the boys" take the position that the Palestinians wanted to "exterminate" them—and this therefore licenses the destruction of houses and villages. After several decades of treating the Arabs as if they were not there at all, Zionism came fully into its own by actively destroying as many Arab traces as it could. From a nonentity in theory to a nonentity in legal fact, the Palestinian Arab lived through the terrible modulation from one sorry condition to the other fully able to witness, but not effectively to communicate, his or her own civil extinction in Palestine.

First he or she was an inconsequential native; then he or she became an absent one; then inside Israel after 1948 he or she acquired the juridical status of a less real person than any individual belonging to the "Jewish people," whether that member was present in Israel or not: the ones who left the country in terror became "refugees," an abstraction faithfully taken account of in annual United Nations resolutions calling upon Israel—as Israel had promised—to take them back, or compensate them for their losses. The list of human indignities and, by any impartial standard, the record of immoral subjugation practised by Israel against the Palestinian Arab remnant is blood-curdling, particularly if counterpointed with that record one hears of the chorus of praise to Israeli democracy. As if to pay that wretched 120,000 (now about 650,000) for its temerity in staying where it did not belong, Israel took over the Emergency Defense Regulations, used by the British to handle Jews and Arabs during the Mandate period from 1922-1948; the Regulations had been a justifiably favorite target of Zionist political agitation, but after 1948 they were used unchanged by Israel against the Arabs.

⁶⁴See Avnery, *Israel Without Zionists*, note 51 above.

⁶⁵Weitz, Vol. III of *My Diary*, p. 293.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, p. 302.

For example, in those parts of Israel that still retain an Arab majority, an anachronistic but no less effective and detailed policy of "Judaization" goes on apace. Thus just as Ruppin and Weizmann in the early days foresaw a Tel Aviv to "outstrip" Arab Jaffa, the Israeli government of today creates a new Jewish Nazareth to outstrip the old Arab town. Here is the project described by an Israeli in 1975:

Upper Nazareth, which was created some fifteen years ago, "in order to create a counterweight to the Arab Nazareth" constitutes a cornerstone of the "Judaization of the Galilee" policy. Upper Nazareth was erected upon the hills surrounding Nazareth as a security belt surrounding it almost on all sides. It was built upon thousands of acres of lands which were expropriated high-handedly, purely and simply by force, from the Arab settlements, particularly Nazareth and Rana.

The very choice of the name "upper" Nazareth, while the stress is upon UPPER is an indicator of the attitude of the authorities, which give the new town special privileges according to their policy of discrimination and lack of attention regarding the city of Nazareth, which is, in their eyes, at the very bottom of the ladder. The visitor to Nazareth can acknowledge with his own eyes the neglect and lack of development of the city, and if from there he goes "up" to upper Nazareth, he will see over there the new buildings, the wide streets, the public lights, the steps, the many storied buildings, the industrial and artisan enterprises, and he will be able to perceive the contrast: development up there and lack of care down there; all the assistance up there and a closed hand down there; constant government building up there, and no construction whatever down there. Since 1966 the [Israeli] Ministry of Housing has not built a single unit of habitation in old Nazareth. (Yoseph Elgazi in *Zo Hadareh*, July 30, 1975)

The drama of a minority ruling is vividly enacted in Nazareth: with all its advantages, upper—that is, Jewish—Nazareth contains 16,000 residents, below it, the Arab city has a population of 45,000. Clearly the Jewish city benefits from the network of resources for Jews. Non-Jews are surgically excluded. The rift between them and the Jews is intended by Zionism to signify a state of absolute difference between the two groups, not merely one of degree. If every Jew in Israel represents "the whole Jewish people"—which is a population made up not only of the Jews in Israel, but also of generations of Jews who existed in the past (of whom the present Israelis are the remnant) and those who exist in the future, as well as all those Jews who live elsewhere—the non-Jews in Israel represent a permanent banishment from their own, as well as all *other* past, present, and future benefits in Palestine. The non-Jew lives a meager existence in villages without libraries, youth centers, theatres, cultural centers; most Arab villages, according to the Arab mayor of Nazareth, who speaks with the unique authority of a non-Jew in Israel, lack electricity, telephone communications, health centers; none has any sewage systems, except Nazareth itself which is only partly serviced by one; none has paved roads or streets. For whereas the Jew is entitled to the maximum, the non-Jew is given a bare minimum. 60,000 Arab workers out of a total work force of 80,000 work in Jewish enterprises. "These workers regard their town and villages as nothing but places of residence. Their only prosperous 'industry' is the creation and supply of manpower."⁶⁷ Manpower without political significance, without a territorial base, without cultural continuity: for the non-Jews in Israel, if they dared to remain after the Jewish state appeared in 1948, there was only the meager subsistence of being *there*, almost powerless except to reproduce themselves and their misery more or less endlessly.

Until 1966 the Arab citizens of Israel were ruled by a military government exclusively in existence to control, bend, manipulate, terrorize, tamper with every fact of Arab life from birth virtually to death; after 1966 the situation is scarcely better, as an unstoppable series of

⁶⁷Tawfiq Zayyad, "Fate of the Arabs in Israel," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, VI, 1 (Autumn, 1976), 98–9.

popular riots and demonstrations testify; the Regulations were used to expropriate thousands of acres of Arab lands either by declaring Arab property to be in a security zone, or by ruling lands to be absentee property (even if, in many cases, the absentees were present: a legal fiction of Kafkaesque subtlety). Any Palestinian can tell you the meaning of the Absentee's Property Law of 1950, the Land Acquisition Law of 1953, the Law for the Requisitioning of Property in Time of Emergency (1949), the Prescription Law of 1958. Moreover Arabs were and are forbidden to travel freely, or to lease land from Jews, or ever to speak, agitate, be educated freely. There were instances when curfews were suddenly imposed on villages; then, when it was manifestly impossible for the working people to know of the curfew, the "guilty peasants were summarily shot: the most wantonly brutal case was Kfar Kassim in October 1956 during which 49 unarmed peasants were shot by the Frontier Guard, a particularly efficient section of the Israeli army. After a certain amount of scandal the officer in charge of the operation was brought to trial, found guilty, and then punished with a fine of one piaster (less than one cent).

Since occupying the West Bank and Gaza in 1967 Israel acquired approximately a million more Arab subjects. Its record has been no better, but this has not been surprising.⁶⁸ Indeed the best introduction to what has been taking place in the occupied territories is the testimony of Israeli Arabs who suffered through Israeli legal brutality before 1967; see, for instance, Sabri Jiryis's *The Arabs in Israel*, or Fouzi al-Asmar's *To be an Arab in Israel*. Israel's political goal has been to keep the Arabs pacified, never capable of preventing their continued domination by Israel. Whenever a nationalist leader gains a little stature, he is either deported, imprisoned (without trial), or he disappears; Arab houses (approximately 17,000) are blown up by the army to make examples of nationalist offenders; *censorship on everything written by or about Arabs prevails*; every Arab is directly subject to military regulations. In order to disguise repression, and to keep it from disturbing the tranquility of Israel consciousness, a corps of Arab experts—Israeli Jews who understand the Arab "mentality"—has grown up. One of them, Amnon Lin, wrote in 1968 that "the people trusted us and gave us a freedom of action that has not been enjoyed by any other group in the country, in any field." Consequently,

Over time we have attained a unique position in the state as experts, and no one dares to challenge our opinions or our actions. We are represented in every department of government, in the Histadrut and in the political parties; every department and office has its "Arabists" who alone act for their minister among the Arabs.⁶⁹

This quasi government interprets and rules the Arab behind a facade of privileged expertise. When visiting liberals wish to find out about "the Arabs" they are given a suitably cosmetic picture.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, of course, Israeli settlements on occupied territories multiply (over

⁶⁸Yet in its editorial of May 21, 1976 the *New York Times* called the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza a "model for future cooperation between the two peoples." Israeli destruction of Arab houses, torture, deportation, murder, administrative detention: all these have been denounced by Amnesty International, the Red Cross, even the recent (1978) State Department Report on human rights abuses. And still the repression continues, both in the gross and coarsely brutal ways I have mentioned, and in other ways too. Collective punishment is common: in 1969 the Military Governor forbade the sale of mutton as a punishment for the whole town of Ramallah; during the middle of the grape season in 1970 the harvesting and sale of grapes were prohibited unless notables denounced the PLO publicly. In April of this year a seven day curfew was imposed on Nablus because (I quote) "the inhabitants did not collaborate with the police."

⁶⁹Quoted in Jiryis, *The Arabs in Israel*, op. cit., p. 70.

⁷⁰See Saul Bellow, *To Jerusalem and Back*, pp. 152–161, and *passim*.

90 of them since 1967); the logic of colonization after 1967 follows the same pattern, resulting in the same displacements of Arabs, as before 1948.⁷¹

There are Zionism and Israel for Jews, and Zionism and Israel for non-Jews. Zionism has drawn a sharp line between Jew and non-Jew; Israel built a whole system for keeping them apart, including the much admired (but completely apartheid) Kibbutzim, to which no Arab has ever belonged. In fact the Arabs are ruled by a separate government premised on the impossibility of isonomic rule for both Jews and non-Jews. Out of this radical notion it became natural for the Arab Gulag Archipelago to develop its own life, to create its own precision, its own detail. Uri Avneri put it this way to the Knesset:

A complete government . . . was created in the Arab sector, a secret government, unsanctioned by law. . . whose members and methods are not known . . . to anyone. Its agents are scattered among the ministries of government, from the Israel Lands Administration to the ministry of education and the ministry of religions. It makes fateful decisions affecting [Arab] lives in unknown places without documents and communicates them in secret conversations or over the telephone. This is the way decisions are made about who goes to the teachers' seminar, or who will obtain a tractor, or who will be appointed to a government post, or who will receive financial subsidies, or who will be elected to the Knesset, or who will be elected to the local council—if there is one—and so on for a thousand and one reasons.⁷²

But from time to time there have been inadvertent insights into government for Arabs in Israel given to watchful observers. The most unguarded example was a secret report by Israel Koenig, Northern District (Galilee) Commissioner of the Ministry, written for the then Prime Minister Rabin on "handling the Arabs in Israel." (The full text was subsequently leaked to *Al-Hamishmar* on September 7, 1976). Its contents make chilling reading, but they fulfill the assumptions of Zionism towards its victims, the non-Jews. Koenig frankly admits that Arabs present a demographic problem since unlike Jews whose natural increase is 1.5% annually, the Arabs increase at a yearly rate of 5.9%. Moreover he assumes that it is national policy for the Arabs to be kept inferior, although they may be naturally susceptible to nationalist restlessness. The main thing, however, is how to make sure that in areas like Galilee the density of the Arab population, and consequently its potential for trouble, be reduced, contained, weakened. Therefore he suggests that it is necessary to

Expand and deepen Jewish settlement in areas where the contiguity of the Arab population is prominent, and where they number considerably more than the Jewish population; examine the possibility of diluting existing Arab population concentrations.

Special attention must be paid to border areas in the country's northwest and to the Nazareth region. The approach and exigency of performance have to deviate from the routine that has been adopted so far. Concurrently, the state law has to be enforced so as to limit "breaking of new ground" by Arab settlements in various areas of the country.

The quasi-military strategy of these suggestions is very near the surface. What we must also remark is Koenig's unquestioning view of the Zionist imperatives he is trying to

⁷¹John Cooley, "Settlement Drive lies behind latest Israeli 'no,'" *Christian Science Monitor*, July 25, 1978, makes it clear that Israel plans officially to populate the West Bank with a Jewish majority (1.25 million) by the year 2000, and that Yamit (in the Rafah Salient—occupied Sinai) is being planned as a major Israeli city, under construction now. According to Arye Duzin, Chairman of the Jewish Agency, Yamit "must always remain under Jewish sovereignty" as forecast by the Zionist Executive in 1903. Many of the settlements are to be filled with South African Jews (hence Israel's close military—indeed nuclear—cooperation with South Africa, and its particularly cordial relations with Prime Minister Vorster, a convicted Nazi during World War Two) and Americans, and of course Russians.

⁷²Jiryis, *The Arabs in Israel*, p. 70.

implement. Nothing in his report intimates any qualms about the plainly racial end his suggestions promote; nor does he doubt that what he says is thoroughly consistent with the history of Zionist policy towards those non-Jews who have had the bad luck to be on Jewish territory, albeit in disquietingly large numbers. He goes on to argue—logically—that any Arab leaders who appear to cause trouble should be replaced, that the government should set about to “create” (the word has an almost theological tone very much in keeping with Jewish policy towards Arabs) “new [Arab] figures of high intellectual standard, figures who are equitable and charismatic,” and completely acceptable to the Israeli rulers. Moreover in “dissipating” the restless nationalist leaders, whose main sin seems to be that they encourage other natives to chafe at their enforced inferiority, the government should form a “special team . . . to examine the personal habits of . . . leaders and other negative people and this information should be made available to the electorate.”

Not content then with “diluting” and manipulating the Arab citizens of Israel, Koenig goes on to suggest ways for economically “neutralizing” and “encumbering” them. Very little of this can be effective, however, unless there were some method of somehow checkmating the “large populating of frustrated intelligentsia forced by a mental need to seek relief. Expressions of this are directed against the Israeli establishment of the state.” Koenig appeared to think it natural enough for Arabs to be kept frustrated, for in reading his suggestions there is little to remind one that Arabs are people, or that the Report was not written about Jews by a Nazi during World War Two, but in 1976 by a Jew about his Arab co-citizens. The master stroke of Koenig’s plan comes when he discusses the social engineering required to use the Arab’s backward “Levantine character” against itself. Since Arabs in Israel are a disadvantaged community, this reality must be enhanced as follows:

- a) The reception criteria for Arab university students should be the same as for Jewish students and this must also apply to the granting of scholarships.
A meticulous implementation of these rules will produce a natural selection [the Darwinian terminology speaks eloquently for itself] and will considerably reduce the number of Arab students. Accordingly, the number of low-standard graduates will also decrease, a fact that will facilitate their absorption in work after studies [the plan here is to make certain that young Arabs would easily be assimilated into menial jobs, thus ensuring their intellectual emasculation].
- b) Encourage the channeling of students into technical professions, to physical and natural sciences. These studies leave less time for dabbling in nationalism and the dropout rate is higher. [Koenig’s ideas about the incompatibility between science and human values go C.P. Snow one better. Surely this is a sinister instance of the use of science as political punishment; it is new even to the history of colonialism.]
- c) Make trips abroad for studies easier, while making the return and employment more difficult—this policy is apt to encourage their emigration.
- d) Adopt tough measures at all levels against various agitators among college and university students.
- e) Prepare absorption possibilities in advance for the better part of the graduates, according to their qualifications. This policy can be implemented thanks to the time available (a number of years) in which the authorities may plan their steps.

Were such ideas to have been formulated by Stalinists, or Orwellian socialists, or even Arab nationalists, the liberal outcry would be deafening. Koenig’s suggestions, however, seem universally justified by the logic of events pitting a small, valiant Western population of Jews against a vast and amorphous, metastasizing and ruinously mindless Arab population. Nothing in Koenig’s report conflicts with the basic dichotomy in Zionism, that is, benevolence towards Jews and an essential but paternalistic hostility towards Arabs.

Moreover Koenig himself writes from the standpoint of an ideologist or theorist, as well as from a position of authority and power within Israeli society. As a ruler of Arabs in Israel Koenig expresses both an official attention to the well-being of Jews, whose interests he maintains and protects, and a paternalistic managerial dominance over inferior natives. His position is therefore consecrated by the institutions of the Jewish state; licensed by them he thinks in terms of a maximum future for Jews and a minimal one for non-Jews. All of these notions are perfectly delivered in the following paragraph from his Report:

Law enforcement in a country with a developing society like that of Israel is a problem to be solved with flexibility, care and much wisdom. At the same time, however, the administrative and executive authority in the Arab sector must be aware of the existence of the law and its enforcement so as to avoid erosion.⁷³

Between Weizmann and Koenig there exists an intervening period of several decades. What was visionary projection for the former became for the latter a context of actual law. From Weizmann's epoch to Koenig's, Zionism for the native Arabs in Palestine had been converted from an advancing encroachment upon their lives to a settled reality—a nation-state—enclosing them within it. For Jews after 1948 Israel not only realized their political and spiritual hopes: it continued to be a beacon of opportunity guiding those of them still living in Diaspora, and keeping those who lived in former Palestine on the frontier of Jewish development and self-realization. For the Arab Palestinians Israel meant one essentially hostile fact, and several unpleasant corollaries. After 1948 every Palestinian disappeared nationally and legally. Some Palestinians reappeared juridically as “non-Jews” in Israel; those who left became “refugees” and later some of those acquired new Arab, European, or American identities. No Palestinian, however, lost his or her “old” Palestinian identity. This is because Israel—for what can now be seen as short-sighted ends—legislated the “non-Jew” into oppressive permanence, and because the Arab states did much the same, supporting and yet stunting an independent Palestinian political identity. Out of such legal fictions as the non-existent Palestinian in Israel and elsewhere, the Palestinian has finally emerged, and with this emergence a considerable amount of international attention prepared at last to take critical notice of Zionist theory and praxis.

The outcry in the West after the 1975 “Zionism is Racism” resolution was passed in the United Nations was doubtless a genuine one. Israel's Jewish achievements—or rather its achievements on behalf of European Jews, less so for the Sephardic (Oriental) Jewish majority—stand before the western world: by most standards they are considerable achievements, and it is right that they not sloppily be tarnished with the sweeping rhetorical denunciation associated with “racism.” For the Palestinian Arabs who have lived and who have now studied the procedures of Zionism towards them and their land, the predicament is complicated, but not finally unclear. They know that the Law of Return allowing a Jew immediate entry into Israel just as exactly prevents the Palestinian from returning to his or her home; they also know that Israeli raids against Palestinian refugee camps inside Lebanon killed literally thousands of civilians, all on the acceptable pretext of fighting terrorism,⁷⁴ but in reality because Palestinians as a race have become synonymous with unregenerate,

⁷³The full text of the Koenig Report was printed in an English translation in *SWASZA*, III, 41, October 15, 1976.

⁷⁴Take as an example the raid on Maalot by Palestinians in May 1974. This has now become synonymous with Palestinian terrorism, yet no US newspaper took note of the fact that for two consecutive weeks before the incident, Israeli artillery and airpower were used to bombard south Lebanon mercilessly. Well over 200 civilians were killed by napalm, and at least 10,000 were made homeless. In spite of this only Maalot is what is recalled.

essentially unmotivated terrorism; they understand, without perhaps being able to master, the intellectual process by which their violated humanity has been transmuted, unheard and unseen, into praise for the ideology that has all but destroyed them. Racism is too vague a term: Zionism is Zionism. For the Arab Palestinian this tautology has a sense that is perfectly congruent with, but exactly the opposite of, what it says to Jews.

And just as no Jew in the last hundred years has been untouched by Zionism, so too no Palestinian has been unmarked by it. Yet it must not be forgotten that the Palestinian was not simply a function of Zionism. His and her life, culture and politics have their own dynamic and ultimately their own authenticity.⁷⁵

IV

By the end of 1948 Israel had come into being as a state, and approximately 780,000 Arabs had fled the territory. The much repeated contention that these Palestinian Arabs left because they were “told to” by leaders of neighboring Arab states has never been even vaguely corroborated by any one seriously interested in examining how it is that virtually an entire population suddenly turns into a flock of sheep acting obediently under wholly foreign instructions. There is more to be gained, I think, if we remember that all during the thirties and the forties Palestinian and Zionist agitation was always about the extent (limiting or increasing it) of Jewish immigration into Palestine. The immediate authority was the British Mandate there, but it was never much in doubt that new Jewish settlers meant pressure on the Arab inhabitants to give up their places for the newcomers. This is the concrete background behind the Palestinian exodus in 1948. No less a part of this background, however, was the failure of the Arab Palestinians to stop the immigration and thereby save their land. But this failure was possible because the Arabs *were* unable to respond to the details of the policy, and insufficiently advanced in their social and political culture to develop a resisting “company” (and certainly a uniformed army) of their own. That is, Zionism’s success, and even its working reality, has historically derived from and prospered as a result of the unevenness that existed, and still exists, between Palestinian Arab society and the invading Jewish organization. In time the gap has increased between the two; Israeli society has developed its strong institutions by weakening the Arab presence in Palestine. Yet, one must add digressively, this has not gone on in the long run without some answering Palestinian response, some Palestinian resistance to the attempted effacement by Israel. Because of a militant and self-conscious Palestinian presence in exile—I speak now of course of the 1948 and 1967 periods—a new Arab force for Palestine now exists in the Palestine Liberation Organization and its numerous adherents inside Israel and in the Occupied Territories. The Israel of today, however, is not the Palestine of the inter-war years, and is very difficult to penetrate. In addition Israel has ringed itself with territories acquired in 1967; militarily ruled and occupied, these lands further insulate Israel from Arab demands on it, although of course the level of Palestinian resistance has increased dramatically.

But let us return now to Israel’s implementation of what I have been calling the Zionist policy of detail. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians are Israeli citizens, and they are kept (as we have seen above) at a level of life and prosperity significantly lower than those of the Jewish majority: the Arabs are, in the statistical language of the Jewish state, “non-Jews”

⁷⁵I have made this point in a friendly critique of Chomsky’s Middle Eastern writings. See my “Chomsky and the Question of Palestine,” *Journal of Palestine Studies*, IV, 3 (Spring, 1975), pp. 100–2.

whose alien being is indicated and expressed in separate figures for it, separate institutions, separate laws. All these perpetuate the unevenness between Jew and non-Jew, as indeed they authorize and consolidate Israel's visibility as an exclusivist, militarist state with borders that are both indefinite and expanding, and a culture openly in contempt of its surroundings.

The current Palestinian actuality is more problematic. That in some rather debatable way the Palestinians exist at present is at least a possible subject for discussion; a few years ago there was occasional talk only of "Arab refugees." But as to what happened to the Palestinians when Israel came into existence in 1948, what they did, how they left Palestine and became refugees—all this is very much enshrouded in controversy, polemic, ideological (and barely historical) debate in the West. It is much easier to talk about and deal with something appearing than with something going out of existence, particularly when the two phenomena—Israel and the Palestinians—are so directly connected, and when appearance has all the obvious attributes of achievements.

Much of the melancholy bitterness that pervades Palestinian life in this century comes from a widespread feeling that as a culture, as a historical effort, it has been marked with failure, at least in general international terms. For perfectly understandable reasons there has been until very recently a Palestinian tendency, I think, to avoid going over the failure in specific terms. One index of this tendency is the total absence of any major, authoritative analytic work on twentieth century Palestinian history: for unless there is some newly gained advance over a historical failure, its victims are rarely inclined to sit down and record its details objectively. In addition, the sheer mechanical problems of getting the history out, read, and diffused in the world have seemed a hopelessly difficult task, so much so that those problems have been viewed symbolically as an aspect of the world's moral favoring of Zionism and the general indifference to the lowly Palestinian. For of what use has it been, we ask ourselves, to tell of our struggle against injustice, if our opponent is covered so totally in the moral armor with which, after almost unthinkably terrible experiences, he has been protected from us? We feel that because of what happened to them in the West, the Jews have been able to get away with almost anything they did to us in Palestine. We know what happened to us, but who listens to us, and who cares? If we say what we went through, and if (a very conditional "if") we are listened to the chances are that our misfortunes will be viewed as a perhaps unhappy, but patently necessary part of the civilized world's compensation for what the Jews have suffered.

There are hopeful signs that this passive self-victimization is slowly ending. The Palestinian withdrawal from what Vico called the world of nations could not go on indefinitely, if only because Palestinians are human beings and there are such things as history and actuality. Prolonged crisis, particularly if a whole ethnic, racial, or national community is identified (however cruelly) as its focus, intensifies community and community creates history. There is a truth which, in its highly selective wisdom and in its rigorous care only for Jews, Zionism has completely neglected.⁷⁶ In time, I think, Palestinian historians will provide instructive reading on this point for Jewish and non-Jewish Zionists alike. Likewise, the whole history of the Palestine problem will be revised considerably to accommodate the role in it of non-exclusivist visionaries, like Judah Magnes

⁷⁶I have tried to discuss this in "Arabs and Jews," a portion of which appeared as an Op-Ed article in the *New York Times*, October 14, 1973, during the October War. The whole text was published in *The Journal of Palestine Studies*, III, 2 (Winter 1974), pp. 3–14.

who truly believed in binational Palestine, or those individuals speaking up for Palestinian rights like Noam Chomsky, Israel Shahak, Uri Davis, Elmer Berger, Felicia Langer, and many others of their stature.

The first phase of Palestinian revival taking place since the late sixties has taken the form of a determined political process, and not simply a change of attitude. There are numerous, indeed enormously numerous, indications of this, and it is so rich and interesting a matter that I can only characterize this process here by calling it the beginning of Palestinian *effectiveness*. And this effectiveness has itself begun with an understanding of what effectiveness has meant in the history of Palestine. Very briefly this is what I mean:

It is not unreasonable to find that the entire Palestinian Arab experience seems unanimous about the view that Zionism visited upon the Arabs a singular injustice. As I said earlier, even Zionist historians writing about the Palestinian Arabs agree that well before the Balfour Declaration the Palestinians universally opposed, and variously tried to resist, Zionist colonialism. But of course Zionism won out, Israel appeared as a Jewish state despite a significant Arab majority, great numbers of Arabs became refugees and exiles, Israel and Zionism continued to demand universal (but not Arab) legitimacy, the Palestinians continue to be oppressed. A cursory examination of what took place immediately reveals an inexorable contrast between Zionist effectiveness in accomplishing a political mission, and Palestinian ineffectiveness in resisting Zionism. The destruction and dislocation of even a backward society—with its traces more or less effaced and a new society implanted virtually in its place—is not, to a secular (i.e., a non-mythological and non-theological) understanding, something to be explained as an accident or as a series of very remarkable coincidences.

It has become clear therefore that Israel was and is the culmination of a politics of a certain kind of effectiveness. This is true equally for the Israeli Jew today and for the Arab Palestinian, one as the unambiguous beneficiary, the other as loser. Seeing this for the Arab Palestinian has been one thing, *knowing it* quite another.⁷⁷ I can cite two dramatically different and contrasting experiences from my life as to what these two things have meant for the Arabs. As a boy during the mid-forties in Palestine, I often used to listen to the political discussion of adults. I was particularly struck by, and have never forgotten, one occasion when an elderly family friend—a lawyer who was prominent in the Jerusalem Arab community, and who was exactly aware of the increasingly strong and institutional Zionist presence in the country—delivered himself of a confident observation. Until then the discussion's mood had been discouraging. "They're so well organized," was the chorus line: "They're training, they're armed to the teeth, they obviously have designs on our property," and on and on. Then he spoke, as from above. "When it comes to an actual battle between us and them, we will bring out a group of Khalilis [Arab residents of Hebron, who were proverbial for their somewhat mindless but always belligerent strength] and they'll chase all the Zionists away with sticks."

For years that blissfully stupid remark about Zionism in Palestine remained with me as an epitome of the Palestinian response to the struggle for the land. Nevertheless, I can also see that my critical attitude to it has been somewhat unfair. The confusions, the pressures, the conflicting problems facing the Arab Palestinians in this century have been enormous,

⁷⁷An important Palestinian statement of how the changing stages and levels of consciousness can be characterized is found in Ibrahim Abu-Lughod's review of Sabry Jiryis's *The Arabs in Israel* in *MERIP Reports*, 58, June 1977.

and very little in their history or society prepared them for their ordeal. Palestinian society was organized along feudal and tribal lines; this is not to say, however, that it did not have its own coherence. It did, but its national integrity could not easily cope with the three powerful strains placed on it mainly after the First War: the British mandate, the Zionist colonial effort, the beginning of modernization. Successfully to deal with one, or perhaps even two of these strains would have been an achievement for any society starting to think in terms of its independence after four centuries of Ottoman rule. But if there was national solidarity on Zionism, there was occasional confusion (and no clear anti-imperialist ideology) governing Arab policies towards the British Mandate government that controlled Palestine until 1948. Moreover the fissures created in the society between a traditionalist leadership of "notables," British and Zionist opposition to it, Arab peasant and working class loyalty to it, as well as economic and social alienation from it, all these imposed divisions that reflected themselves in a disastrously imperfect Arab awareness of what one could (or was able to) do effectively to go on as a society in Palestine.

Yet the idea of that society, if not the society itself, *has* gone on. This is something that is little short of amazing. No Palestinian has given up on the desire for return; nor has anyone for any significant length of time considered the alternative of fading indiscriminately into the surrounding Arab ocean. No Arab community has in so short a period of time—a little less than a generation—reflected so deeply and so seriously *as a community* on the meaning of its history, the meaning of a pluralistic society given the dismal fate of multi-ethnic communities in the world, the meaning of national independence and self-determination against a background of exile, imperialist oppression, and colonialist dispossession.⁷⁸ But all these indices of collective Palestinian maturity were enabled, and indeed grounded in, the Palestinian approach to political effectiveness, which is a new phenomenon in the people's history.

This brings me to the second experience, the one illustrating the dramatically grasped knowledge of (as opposed to a silent testimony to) what political effectiveness means. In the spring of 1977, I participated as a member in the deliberations of the Palestine National Council, which is the Palestinian parliament in exile. Meeting in Cairo, in the Arab League building, the Council numbered about 290 delegates; about 100 West Bank members were not present because Israel would not have let them return to their homes if they attended the meeting. Nevertheless the Council was broadly representative of every Palestinian community and of every Palestinian individual.⁷⁹ For the week of open discussion that took place before the Resolutions were formulated and debated, the pattern of discussion was a survey of recent events involving the Palestinians: the real subject was how well the PLO did, the PLO being in this case the executive to the Council's legislative branch. Many events of considerable importance had occurred since the Council's last meeting in 1974: there had been the Lebanese war, numerous diplomatic and political changes, a great number of internal Palestinian shifts in attitudes, principal among them the decisions to opt for a state alongside Israel and to begin to meet with Israeli (in this case Zionist) doves who had expressed support for Palestinian rights.

⁷⁸As to how this has been translated by Palestinians into a remarkable educational achievement (the highest Arab literacy rate, the greatest number per 1000 of university graduates among the Arabs, etc.) see Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, "Educating a Community in Exile: The Palestinian Experience," *The Journal of Palestine Studies*, II, 3 (Spring 1973), 94–111.

⁷⁹It is relevant to mention here that because of the political constraints of existing under essentially autocratic military regimes it is impossible to take a thorough Palestinian census. This perhaps gives the Western radical some idea of what the concrete problems are.

It has since amazed me that of the huge corps of reporters and media representatives there was not a single one who had the perspicacity to see what really momentous things were happening in Cairo. This failure was no less true of the vast body of Middle Eastern “experts” in Europe and the United States in the months following the Council meeting. For the first time in recent memory there was a broadly representative national body in the Arab world actually debating important matters in a totally democratic way. The PLO came in for heavy criticism: its executive Committee, Yasir Arafat, and the rest were subjected to minute, critical scrutiny. There is no Arab country in which such things can go on, in which the leadership’s accountability is searched, and its responsibility gone over openly, discussed, analyzed, resolved upon in an orderly way. It is necessary to bear in mind that the men and women assembled in Cairo were exiles, all without a territory of their own, all residents in another country with varying but essentially limited conditions of political freedom. Yet the main burden of the Council’s activities as I saw them, despite the predictable foolishness of many speeches, was a collective will to understand in detail everything that affected the Palestinian question. I doubt that anyone was deluded into casual optimism or even momentary encouragement by the sheer fact of *having* a Palestine National Council at all, or a PLO with social, military, and diplomatic programs: all these were of estimable importance for a community denied its existence by the very people that had ejected it from its homeland, a community so unimaginably complicated in its dispersion (there were Palestinians there from North and South America, from Europe, from Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt, Libya—and none actually resident in Palestine), a community still extremely far from having achieved its minimally acceptable goal of getting Israeli troops out of the barest third of its original national homeland. Everyone there wanted to know how the struggle could be carried on, in every possible or available detail. Moreover—and this is the impressive thing—an attempt was being made to deal with Israel and the Jews not as an ultimately avoidable if temporarily unavoidable political fact, but as something essential to an understanding of the Palestinian political destiny. The Zionist movement that had been built upon a total denial of the Palestinian presence could not boast of so painstaking a recognition of its total reality as the one that took place in Cairo.

The political distance between these two quintessentially Palestinian experiences is formidable. It is not a question of having become “realistic” in some vulgar, perhaps opportunistic way that the distance can be measured. In both instances, back then in the forties and now in the seventies, the Palestinians spoke from the standpoint of a people *losing* its political and human rights. The contemporary Palestinian, however, was regaining his or her sense of what was probably and possible for him or her, and central to that was an acute grasp of *effectiveness*, an awareness of what one was, where one stood, how one conducted one’s struggle in the present which was viewed both as the product of the past and as the producer of a new future. To a very large degree of course the Palestinian reality today is dominated by what each Palestinian has suffered directly at the hands of Zionism. There is no evading that history and that actuality, just as there can be no Palestinian future without a transcendence of it. Therefore a generous portion of the Cairo debate centered on the specific reality that was Israel, and how that reality has affected and, to a certain extent, shaped the Palestinian counter-responses.

Thus the major step *up* so to speak in Palestinian consciousness has been a collective national and detailed understanding, a detailed chronicling, a detailed coming to terms with—a seeing of—the day-to-day effectiveness of Zionism and Israel in oppressing the native population of Palestine. Vision and recognition in this Palestinian way dialectically

answer Zionist blindness. Together these visions and recognitions in the making have made possible for the Palestinian to formulate a critique of and an alternative for Zionism *as a practice* of incorporating Jews and discriminating against non-Jews. No such alternative would be possible without a careful critique absolutely based on real historical experience. And so a principal platform of the current Palestinian political program—and I speak here of a very broad consensus not adequately represented (or representable for that matter) by one or another Palestinian leader or intellectual—is that reality must first of all be defined historically as the precise effect of Zionism on its victims, even as the successes of Zionism for its chosen beneficiaries are also recognized. In those terms then the Palestinian political actuality has shifted from a program of resistance by tough villagers armed with sticks to resistance whose starting point is an incorporating and revising of Zionist effectiveness against the native Arab Palestinian. Thus a *Palestinian* effectiveness slowly emerges.

Quite literally, the irreducible and functional meaning of being a Palestinian has meant living through Zionism first as a method of acquiring Palestine, second as a method for dispossessing and exiling Palestinians, third as a method for maintaining Israel as a state in which Palestinians are treated as non-Jews, and from which politically they remain exiles despite (in the case of the 650,000 Israeli-Palestinian citizens) their continued presence on the land. In all these instances Zionism was premised on the evacuation of Palestine by its majority native inhabitants. As I have said before, there is no minimizing this stark truth, and every Zionist leader of note has faced it squarely. To found a state in Asia and people it with a largely immigrant population drawn initially from Europe means depopulating the original territory. This has been a simple *desideratum* of Zionism, with very complicated ramifications. Yet for the native Arab Palestinian and for the immigrant Jew who took his or her place, the mere fact of substitution has never varied.

V

Three positive Palestinian achievements in recent years extend this very incomplete inventory of the Palestinian Zionist encounter and will allow me to indicate—by way of very summary conclusion—the contours of the future, the likelihood (and the best kind) of peace between Palestinians and Zionism, the emerging pattern of continued struggle. First, is the presence of a Palestinian political reality, with the PLO at its center, from which no Palestinian has broken, despite our wideflung geographic dispersion, Israel's attacks on us, the future's uncertainty. Second, is the core of what I believe is the Palestinian idea itself, which was first formulated in the 30s by the Arab wing of the Palestinian Communist party: the idea of a secular, democratic state in Palestine for Jews and Arabs.⁸⁰ In its reformulation by Palestinian activists in the 60s it has been the only political idea since World War Two to have appeared in the region with genuinely libertarian power: that it is at present the object of regretful nostalgia or contempt has prompted very few people to ask whether that is not another reflection of how unhealthy the politics of ethnocentrism, religious exclusivity, and racial purity has been. Third, is the genuine if modest appearance of popular struggle against oppression, and more significantly, the faint signs of a relatively advanced political consciousness in the region, both as a result of the Palestinian focus. These three things are, I

⁸⁰This has been studied by in Musa Khalil, "Al-Hizb al-Shiyu'i al-Filastini [The Palestine Communist Party], 1918-1948, *Sbu'un Filastiniya*, 39 (November 1974), pp. 111–43. I summarize its findings in "Chomsky and the Question of Palestine," see note 75 above, p. 100.

think, matters for considerable optimism, however much the negative things take away from them in the short run.

Of the Arab world as a whole it does not take much insight to say that it is now a profoundly depressing place. Speaking both as a Palestinian and an intellectual, I would have to say that citizens in the Arab countries have paid far too high a price in political culture, in intellectual development, in basic quality of life, for the almost total absence of freedom of thought and opinion presented to them as an axiom of national security. The effects of army rule, minority tyranny, party-line conformity, and great power hegemony have been not only an utter mediocrity of performance in nearly every sphere of human endeavor but a widespread apathy on issues of basic importance to the region as a whole. Quite apart from the way it illuminated its local setting (rivalry with Syria, fear of radical states like Libya, hatred of the Soviet Union), the meaning of Sadat's trip to Israel was how it revealed the blankness, the vacancy of many (but by no means all) of those segments of Arab political life that attempted a response to it, and to which it was a challenge. Of course Sadat's gesture also revealed a great deal about Israel, and much too about how theatrical overkill has replaced the daily work of politics in the region: but it opened a further rift in the Arab polity, a rift that reproduces and develops the staggering contradictions already at work there. On the one hand there are repressive regimes, on the other an almost unlimited supply both of poverty and of wealth. There is an educated sector and a culture being produced for the first time as a mass-based phenomenon, balanced on the other side by complete regimentation, by consumerism, by the total domination of Western market economies; there is fat political rhetoric based on a nowhere apparent military "liberation," as well as an even fatter military establishment with (for the first time since the Nasser period) perceptual chaos as to enemies, allies, lines of confrontation, and demarcation. Lebanon is the perfect symbol of this. One could go on listing more things here too, although the level of Arab corruption and waste, the total lack of vision in planning and investment is ultimately boring in its sameness, in its impoverishing monotony.

In short, things have never been as bad as they are now, and thirty years of Israel and almost one hundred of Zionism seem like only one especially concentrated portion of a more complex history involving imperialism, a whole slew of, for the most part, undistinguished client states, and an only just visible possibility of real social revolution. The present "peace process" (surely one of the corniest cant phrases of all time) seems insignificant if a reasonably long perspective is adopted. After all, how long can partial tinkering settlements remain stable, how long will people stand to be denied their basic human rights, how long will the mendacity and pusillanimity of supposed statesmen and leaders be tolerated?

If, as radical critics, we must answer "not long," we must also be willing, I think, to feel ourselves to be doing something more than writing clever tracts proving how right we were, how wrong they were. There are numerous politico-cultural imperatives by which we must live and work, and these periodically require vitalization, revision, rethinking. Our role then is not a marginal one, however much our self-marginalization (if I may coin a phrase for what many Western Left literary intellectuals, at least, have done to themselves) may convince us otherwise. Certainly I do not mean to imply, on the basis of what I have tried to do in this essay, that only if you are a Palestinian can you struggle meaningfully, that only (by extension) a woman, a black, a political prisoner can understand and study and act upon the meaning of each particular form of oppressed otherness. Far from it. Critical consciousness means being able—by discipline, by seeing, by a sense of community, by

dedication to a set of rational libertarian values—to exist, intellectually and theoretically, in the very forms of oppression, to understand them as historical experiences, to grasp them in their cultural, material density.

In the particular case of the Palestinian/Zionism conflict a group of important issues proposes itself for radical intellectual analysis and critique. That there is an impasse now, that real peace seems so far-fetched and remote a possibility and, worst of all, that Western metropolitan intellectuals see the situation as so entirely confused as to be left to the “expert” crisis-managers: all these are symptoms of the failure to be critical, of the failure of intellectuals to contribute in intellectual production to the political struggle. After all, since as human beings we exist in the same world with the not-so-far-away peoples of the Third World, why should we not therefore undertake seriously to understand, and fight against, the hegemony of imperialist culture, especially when it means deserting the hermeticism of metaphysical cobweb spinning, and resolving to try reading and writing history for a change?

I conclude therefore with a brief enumeration of questions—problems—requiring precisely the kind of oppositional attention I have been discussing since, it is my contention, intellectual matters, no less than “practical” ones, produce the world in which ultimately we all live.

1. Human rights: how is the matter of US/USSR detente to be disentangled from an intricate set of other interests: the problem of dissidents in the Soviet Union; the privilege of Zionism over every other Soviet nationality problem in the Soviet system and the achievement of a special status for Jewish immigration to Israel out of the USSR; the lack of attention paid by the Zionist organizations to persecution of Jews in Argentina and the absence of a campaign to help Jews emigrate to Israel from, say, Latin America; the necessity for Israel of maintaining a continual flow of European Jews into the country in order to keep control—indefinitely—over enormous Arab territory (possibly greater than what Israel now holds, including Transjordan itself) and to keep dominance in the hands of Ashkenazim in a country that is demographically “Oriental” (the similarity, and hence the rationale for alliance, with right-wing Maronites in Lebanon); the exploitation versus the necessity of never forgetting Nazi genocide practiced against European Jews, all that connected with the slow re-emergence of anti-Semitism in the West, the general intellectual and cultural swing to the right, the submission of intellectuals to control of the state; the rise of state-worship.

2. The complex problem of violence, state terrorism, the limits and the theory of revolutionary armed struggle, its limitations and its pitfalls particularly as a result of the neglect of cultural struggle.

No issue has been more inflamed and less intelligently contributed to in this country and Western Europe generally than this one. One of the consistent, preposterous claims made by Zionism, and the entire state propaganda apparatus of Israel, is that Palestinian struggle is *essentially* a terrorist attack on a Western democracy (see Daniel Patrick Moynihan’s speeches at the UN during 1975; also nearly every issue of *Commentary*, *Encounter*, *The Public Interest*, *The New Republic*). Here, as in the historical analysis of Zionism, there first needs to be a simple uncovering of the record. Before 1948 the overwhelming majority of attacks on civilians are Zionist attacks on Palestinians, and since 1948 it has been an Israeli policy—never discussed in the West, although openly admitted in Israel—to punish civilian and particularly Palestinian populations, wherever they may be. As an instance I cite here an interview with General Gur, Chief of Staff of the Israeli army:

Q—Is it true [during the March 1978 Israeli invasion of Lebanon] that you bombarded agglomerations [of people] without distinction?

A—I am not one of those people who have a selective memory. Do you think that I pretend not to know what we have done all these years? What did we do the entire length of the Suez Canal? A million and a half refugees! Really: where do you live? . . . We bombarded Ismalia, Suez, Port-Said, and Port Fouad. A million and a half refugees. . . . Since when has the population of South Lebanon become so sacred? They knew perfectly well what the terrorists were doing. After the massacre at Avivim, I had four villages in South Lebanon in South Lebanon bombed without authorization.

Q—Without making distinctions between civilians and non-civilians?

A—What distinction? What had the inhabitants of Irbid [a large town in North Jordan, principally Palestinian in population] done to deserve bombing by us?

Q—But military communiques always spoke of returning fire and of counter-strikes against terrorist objectives?

A—Please be serious. Did you not know that the entire valley of the Jordan had been emptied of its inhabitants as a result of the war of attrition?

Q—Then you claim that the population ought to be punished?

A—Of course, and I have never had any doubt about that. When I authorized Yanouch [diminutive name of the Commander of the Northern Front, responsible for the Lebanese operation] to use aviation, artillery and tanks [in the invasion] I knew exactly what I was doing. It has now been thirty years, from the time of our Independence War until now, that we have been fighting against the civilian [Arab] population which inhabited the villages and towns, and every time that we do it, the same question gets asked: should we or should we not strike at civilians? (Al-Hamishmar, May 10, 1978)

Such candor deserves, I think, to be taken seriously, although you would not think that such declarations as well as openly admitted Israeli use of napalm, cluster bombs, defoliating chemicals against Palestinian refugees could leave Western intellectuals talking exclusively and endlessly about Palestinian “terrorism.” What is meant to be the response of a desperate, dispersed, and expatriated *people* to the state and the movement that has violently attacked them at home and from abroad for almost a century? Conversely, at what point can revolutionary armed struggle turn into a series of alternations between individual adventurism, militarism at the expense of political struggle, and mass-based action? What about the conflict between individual rights, *raisons d'état*, state violence against the individual, the monopoly on violence possessed by the state, and the individual's (and the people's) right to defense against the state apparatus?⁸¹ More crucially: what has been the

⁸¹A remarkable case in point is the Esmail story. Esmail is a Brooklyn born American of Palestinian descent who was arrested in Israel on December 21, 1977 while on a visit to his dying father on the West Bank. Israel empowered itself to arrest anyone anywhere for “crimes” declared to be crimes under Israeli law: this is the notorious Extraterritorial Law of 1973. Esmail's crime was alleged to be a visit in 1976 to Libya, where he was supposed to have had Palestinian guerrilla training. He was tortured, detained in prison for seven months, and finally sentenced on June 12, 1978 to 15 months in prison for “membership in an illegal organization.” This almost incredible travesty of justice was defended in the *New York Times* by a Harvard Law Professor—Alan Dershowitz—as a singular instance of democracy. The official US position on this is lukewarm at best, since it has been reported that the FBI provided the Israeli secret service with information about Esmail. (For more on Esmail, contact the National Committee to Defend the Human Rights of Sami Esmail, 1118 South Harrison Road, East Lansing, Michigan 48323, as well as the Palestine Human Rights Campaign, note 11, above).

There are several thousand Palestinian political prisoners in Israel, about whom very little noise is made in this country. And the oppression goes on, e.g., the fate of the Sinai Beduins, 10,000 of whom have already been “transferred” to make place for Israeli settlements. The worst part of this is the continuing intellectual perversion

intellectuals' role in legitimating not only the state, but the state's pretense to all rights, all legitimacy, all values? The relationship in such instances between the intellectuals, the mass media, cultural stereotypes, and the constant latency of violence needs careful study.

3. Free debate, cultural pluralism, absence of censorship, cultural freedom: these also are much discussed, and left stupidly unattended to by literary intellectuals who on the one hand inveigh against liberalism, proclaim the dangers of the right-wing, the dangers of thought-control and consumerism, and, on the other hand, live quite happily in an unanalyzed system of media monopoly, press and publishing censorship, news doctoring, and other forms of cultural violence. What is the relationship between late capitalism and the various forms of cultural hegemony, between domination and persuasion, between the mores of the academy and those of business and government?

4. Finally, (a) what role as a producer of criticism and historical knowledge does the Western intellectual play given the background of Occidental domination and oppression of the non-Occidental world; (b) what is the meaning of community given the construction and abuse of Others—women, blacks, Palestinians, etc.—and given also the sustained production of alienating technological discourses (colluded in by liberal intellectuals) in the advanced capitalist world?

To this cluster of problems the critical consciousness can respond only with: the study of history, a belief in rational knowledge, a strong sense of what *political* life is all about, a set of values grounded absolutely in human community, democracy, and faith in the future. Thus do theory and praxis become aspects of each other, when intellectual work more closely approaches political worldliness, and when the study of culture is activated by values, ideals, and political commitment.⁸² In no way, however, do I advocate the abandonment either of theory or of one's sense of *free* and *complete* intellectual activity. On the contrary, it is those alone that enable one fully to be, to participate, in history.

of reality in reputable scholarly undertakings. Take Michael Walzer's seemingly original and deep book, *Just and Unjust Wars* (New York: Basic, 1977). Walzer is known as a socialist, yet his book in fact argues a strong case for Israeli aggression against the Arabs, and for Israeli "retaliation" against Palestinians—thus patently corrupting the moral and intellectual grounds on which the book's whole argument is constructed. Yet only two of the numerous reviewers even bothered to notice this: see Noam Chomsky, "An Exception to the Rules," *Inquiry*, April 17, 1978, pp. 23–7; and Richard Falk, "The Moral Argument as Apologia," *The Nation*, March 25, 1978, pp. 341–3.

⁸²See my "The World, the Text, the Critic," *Bulletin of the Middle West Modern Language Association*, 8, 2 (Fall 1975), 1–23.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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Martin Blatt, Uri Davis, and Paul Kleinbaum. Without a doubt, however, the most impressive material coming out of Israel is produced by one man, Professor Israel Shahak, Professor of Chemistry, Hebrew University, a formidable scholar and Chairman of the Israeli League of Human Rights. He translates articles, does detailed studies of his own, mounts campaigns on behalf of human rights in Israel and the occupied territories. His materials (The Shahak Papers) can now be obtained from the Palestine Human Rights Campaign, 1322 18th NW., Washington D.C. 20036; one set alone (based on what takes place in about three weeks) is worth more than any combination of what Western newspapers can deliver to their readers in a decade.

In addition to the Palestine Human Rights Campaign, which regularly holds meetings and distributes literature, several organizations, here and abroad publish counter-archival material. The Association of Arab-American University Graduates (AAUG) publishes books, occasional papers, and the like; these can be obtained by writing

AAUG, P.O.B. 7391, North End Station, Detroit, Michigan 48202. The Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP) is the only serious radical research collective on the Middle East in this country, run almost entirely by Americans; MERIP publishes a monthly bulletin and occasional papers. Write MERIP, P.O. Box 3122, Columbia Heights Station, Washington, D.C. 20010. Other useful periodical material can be obtained from the *Review of Middle Eastern Studies* (Ithaca Press), *Gazelle*, *Israleft*, *Kbamsin*, *Monthly Review*, *In These Times*, *Seven Days*, columns by Alexander Cockburn and James Ridgeway in the *Village Voice*. Zed Press in England and Maspéro in France publish important books. I have found it important to read military journals, *The Wall Street Journal*, Congressional hearings, State Department records, and other such establishment periodicals, for the viewpoint they put forward. The Middle East establishment in particular is represented by *The Middle East Journal*, a quarterly. As antidotes, especially on the 1967 and 1973 wars, see Ibrahim Abu-Lughod (ed.), *The Arab-Israeli Confrontation of June 1967: An Arab Perspective* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970) and Naseer Aruri (ed.), *Middle East Crucible: Studies on the Arab-Israeli War of October 1973* (Wilmette: Medina Press, 1975).

Despite all this, two qualifications need to be made: (1) Western readers still cannot easily get hold of material produced in Arabic, which is obviously crucial (e.g., the journals, studies, and reports produced by the PLO Research Center in Beirut); (2) in comparison with pro-Zionist material, everything I have listed, with a few exceptions, is much harder to come by, a situation colluded in, as I said above, by major networks, publishers, newspapers news services, and distributors.

E.W.S.