

Chapter 1

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.

Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*

Zionism and the Attitudes of European Colonialism

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 it 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; and (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 civilians,¹ 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 five hundred thousand 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 millennia 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 against imperialism, against the techniques of secrecy and domination, against ahistorical rhetoric, and (in the United States at least) against liberal hegemony.²

The special, one might even call it the privileged, place of the United States in this struggle 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 United States (Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt), and the redoubtable political and military visibility of the Palestinian people and their representative, the

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PLO — the prevailing pro-Israeli bias persists. For not only does it have deep cultural roots in the West generally, and the United States in particular, but its *negative, interdictory* character vis-à-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 1940s and 1950s major figures in the United States who had no particular connection with Middle Eastern politics — men and women like Reinhold Niebuhr, Edmund Wilson, and Eleanor Roosevelt³ — 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 in the United States 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 percent to 85 percent of the earth's land.

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 toward Zionism:

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.⁴

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 sub-

sequent 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 either to reduce the Palestinians to a nonexistent 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 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.

Therefore a historical study such as this must set out consciously and deliberately not only to provide the Palestinian history suppressed programmatically 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 counterarchive of material about settler-colonialism. 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.⁵

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. 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.

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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 versus 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.

On the other hand, 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 I have read, in what I write about, even in what I do politically, I am profoundly influenced by mainstream Western attitudes toward the history of the Jews, anti-Semitism, the destruction of European Jewry. 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: toward a genuinely hopeful socioreligious 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 traveling 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 wellborn Englishmen and women in the novel are portrayed as wandering and alienated beings. If the novel's poorer English people (e.g., 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.⁶

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 a "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, 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

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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.⁷

“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 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 humankind. 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 a 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 grate among our people, and the work will begin. (emphases added)⁸

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.

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*),⁹ 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: Ernest 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

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in numerous travel accounts, in novels like Disraeli's *Tancred*, even in the various nineteenth-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 and villages and towns were being 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. 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.¹⁰

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.¹¹

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 (1) the nonexistent Arab inhabitants, (2) the complementary Western-Jewish attitude to an "empty" territory, and (3) 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, and so on. 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 formed 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. It needs to be remarked, however, that Zionism (like the view held by the Puritans of America as an empty land) was a colonial vision unlike that of most other nineteenth-century European powers, for whom the natives of outlying territories were *included* in the redemptive *mission civilisatrice*.

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 subhuman by nineteenth-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 Theodor 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 sizable 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 sizable segment of the Israeli population has as yet been able to confront the terrible social and political injustice done the native

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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. As a result it has been impossible for Jews to understand the human tragedy that Zionism has caused for the Arab Palestinians; 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 of overseas settlement itself was very current at the end of the nineteenth 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 and its work in 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."¹²

There could have been no doubt whatever in Herzl's mind that Palestine in the late nineteenth 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, by Lamartine, Chateaubriand, Flaubert, and so on. 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 1880s) 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.¹³

One need not wholly accept the conspiratorial tone of these comments (whether Herzl's or Stewart's) to grant that world opinion had not been, until the 1960s and 1970s, when the Palestinians forced their presence on world politics, 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) that made 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 Zionism has been the agent in Palestine.

What did the victims feel as they watched the Zionists arriving in Palestine? What do they think as they hear Zionism described today? Where do they look in Zionism's history to locate its roots, and the origins of its practices toward 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: "[T]he 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.¹⁴

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Imperialism was and still is a political philosophy whose aim and purpose for being are 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, its 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 nonexistent, 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 reconstituting, restoring, and transforming activity, turning old fields into new ones, the link between an 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 (see, e.g., the work of 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 gun-fodder for the white Frenchman.¹⁵ 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, were the taxonomy of linguistics and the extension of ideas about language families into theories of human types. In 1808, as an instance, Schlegel discerned a clear rift between the Indo-Germanic (or Aryan) languages, on the one hand, and the Semitic-African languages, on the other. 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 (studied by Harry Bracken)¹⁶ 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 three-hundred-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 noncivilized peoples was an attitude toward land, almost a doxology about land that noncivilized people supposedly lacked. A civilized man, it was believed, 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. An uncivilized people either farmed land badly (i.e., inefficiently by Western standards) or left it to rot. From this string of ideas, by which whole native societies who had 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*,¹⁷ 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."¹⁸ 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

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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.¹⁹

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 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 ideal — something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to.²⁰

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 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.

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,

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.²¹

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, and uncounted resources was to be converted into productivity, order, and 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, and 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.²² 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, 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 I, 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; moreover, in formulating the concept of a Jewish nation "reclaiming" its own territory, Zionism not only accepted the generic racial concepts of European culture but 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.²³ 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.²⁴

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 "nonplace," Jews in

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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.²⁵

Zionist Population, Palestinian Depopulation

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 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: "[T]he intention to create the Jewish National Home is to cause the disappearance or subordination of the Arabic population, culture and language."²⁶ What generations of Palestinian Arabs watched therefore was an unfolding design, whose deeper roots in Jewish history and the terrible Jewish experience were 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.²⁷

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? is 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 fitted into the grand vision. Not that this "vision" was merely a theoretical matter: it was later to determine the character and even the detail of Israeli government policy toward the native Arab Palestinians; and it 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 to 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 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.²⁸

The context of this remark, however, is a sale made to the Zionists by a wealthy absentee landlord (the Lebanese Sursuk family) of unpromising marshland. 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.²⁹

One short-term gain was that Zionism "raised the value of the...land,"³⁰ 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."³¹ 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.

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 archaeology 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 sixty-year Jewish sovereignty over Palestine that had lapsed for two millennia. In Jewish hearts, however, Israel had always been there, an actuality difficult for the natives to perceive. Zionism therefore reclaimed, redeemed, repeated, replanted, and 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.

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.³²

Children's literature in Israel 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* (September 20, 1974) said, 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 Palestine today, find in it intellectual cultural and social resources not inferior to those of the Western world."³³ 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."³⁴ 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.

On another occasion, he recounts an experience that 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.

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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 Arthur 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.³⁵

In time of course the preeminence 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 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.³⁶

This is C. L. Temple's *The 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. The Zionist in Palestine or the Britisher in Africa was therefore realistic. He saw facts and dealt with them and 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 (1) when the natives would not acknowledge Jewish sovereignty over Palestine and (2) 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; they had no equally detailed counterproposal. They assumed that since they lived on the land and legally owned it, it was 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 early Zionist admitted); it was unfair to the natives (as some early Zionists, like Ahad Ha'am also admitted); and it was doomed to die of its various theoretical weaknesses.

Between Weizmann's epoch to our own, 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 shortsighted 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 nonexistent 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 toward 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, but in reality because Palestinians as a race have become synonymous with unregenerate, essentially unmotivated terrorism; they understand, without perhaps being able to master, the intellectual process by which their violated humanity has been trans-

lated, unhealed, and unhealed. "Racism" is this tautology of, what it is:

And just as too no Palestinian have their own

1. Menachem Begin, "The Cross figures for Of this group, the Deir Yassin was a loud speaker and aged to be warning our friends in the ensuing Begin, David all the Arabs meaning: the Hotel, the position that Begin had the first time *Israleft* 108; that the presence of one Shmuel (cold blood in seven years) *Lehis*" *Al Ha*

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muted, 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 or her life, culture, and politics have their own dynamic and ultimately their own authenticity.

NOTES

1. Menachem Begin, *The Revolt* (1948; reprint, Los Angeles: Nash Publishing, 1972), 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 thirty-five Arabs in cold blood in Hula village; Lehis was given an unconditional amnesty (his sentence was to have been seven years) and rose to the top of the Zionist hierarchy. See R. Barkan, "The Strange Case of Shmuel Lehis" *Al Hamishmar*, March 3, 1978.

2. See 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).

3. See Niebuhr's letter to the *New York Times*, November 21, 1947, and his "A New View of Palestine," *The Spectator*, August 6, 1946; for Wilson, see his *Black, Red, Blond, and Olive* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 462–63, 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.

4. Quoted in Christopher Sykes, *Crossroads to Israel, 1947-1948* (1965; reprint, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), 5.

5. See Golda Meir's famous remark in 1969: "The Palestinians don't exist." General (later Prime Minister) Rabin referred to them for decades as "so-called Palestinians."

6. George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (1876; reprint, London: Penguin, 1967), 50.

7. *Ibid.*, 592.

8. *Ibid.*, 594–95.

9. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978), 153–57, 214, 228.

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

11. *Ibid.*, 34.

12. See Philip D. Curtin, ed., *Imperialism* (New York: Harper, 1971), which contains a good selec-

tion from the imperialist literature of the last two hundred years. I survey the intellectual and cultural backgrounds of the period in *Orientalism*, chaps. 2 and 3.

13. Desmond Stewart, *Theodor Herzl* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1974), 192.
14. Antonio Gramsci, *The Prison Notebooks: Selections*, trans. and ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 324.
15. See Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1973), 129.
16. Harry Bracken, "Essence, Accident and Race," *Hermathena* 116 (winter 1973) 81-96.
17. See Curtin, *Imperialism*, 93-105, which contains an important extract from Temple's book.
18. George Nathaniel Curzon, *Subjects of the Day: Being a Selection of Speeches and Writings* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1915), 155-56.
19. Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness, in Youth and Two Other Stories* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1925), 52.
20. *Ibid.*, 50-51.
21. Cited in Agnes Murphy, *The Ideology of French Imperialism* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1949), 189, 110, 136.
22. Amos Oz, a leading Israeli novelist (also considered a "dove"), puts it nicely: "[F]or 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, 61).
23. See the forthright historical account of this in Amos Elon, *The Israelis: Founders and Sons* (New York: Bantam, 1972), 218-24.
24. Maxime Rodinson, *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State?* (New York: Anchor Foundation, 1973), 39.
25. *Ibid.*, 38.
26. Quoted in David Waines, "The Failure of the Nationalist Resistance," in *The Transformation of Palestine*, ed. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1987), 220.
27. *Ibid.*, 213.
28. *Trial and Error: The Autobiography of Chaim Weizmann* (New York: Harper, 1959), 371.
29. *Ibid.*, 125.
30. *Ibid.*, 253.
31. *Ibid.*, 128-29.
32. Reproduced in *Haolam Hazeb*, May 15, 1974. Uri Avnery, the editor of *Haolam Hazeb*, 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).
33. *Trial and Error*, 130.
34. *Ibid.*, 188.
35. *Ibid.*, 130.
36. C. L. Temple, *The Native Races and Their Rulers* (1918; reprint, London: Frank Cass, 1968), 41.

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