

Zionism and Imperialism: The Historical Origins

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Zionism as a modern political creed arose as a reaction to three interacting challenges or problems facing Europe in the nineteenth century, the heyday of Western imperialism.

The first of these was the growth and expansion of European imperialism, which necessitated the search for new sources of raw materials and markets for the finished products, in addition to securing the lines of commercial and military communication. The importance of the Arab lands as the gateway to Africa and the bridge to Asia was made evident by Napoleon's campaign (1797-1799). Yet the "dangers" of an independent state comprising Egypt and other parts of the Arab world set up by Muhammad Ali (Al-Kabir) became clear soon afterwards. Thus the need for stifling any nascent independent state, doubly threatening to imperialism later on, in the wake of the spread of Arab nationalist sentiment, became increasingly persistent as the "Ottoman Empire," the "sick man of Europe," drifted further towards disintegration.

Secondly: the failure of European liberalism and the ideas of equality and democracy to incorporate and assimilate the Jew were combined with the capitalist crisis in Eastern Europe that followed in the wake of the adoption of industrialization with the consequent loss of vocation for a great number of Jews who could not easily adjust to the transformation of the feudal economic system. It is important to note that this separation of the Jews from their environments encouraged a Jewish "apartness" which was, in the past, a contributory factor to the phenomenon of anti-Jewishness.

Thirdly: The spread of aggressive and chauvinist nationalism in Europe stressed racial qualities and the racial basis of the nation and the nation-state as well as racial superiority and the need for expansion, Lebensraum,

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which was diverted to overseas colonies and possessions. Superiority, exploitation and domination were upheld as a civilizational mission under the notion of the “white man’s burden.” These ideas and notions played a crucial role in the ideological formulation of Zionism as well as a guiding light for its founders.

These challenges were known as the “Eastern Question” or the “Syrian Question,” and the “Jewish Question.” We shall see that it was the first question which prompted the major imperialist figures to propose the idea of creating a client Jewish settler state in Palestine, primarily designed to block the fulfilment of unity and independence in that important area of the world, and to serve the interests of the imperialist sponsors and protectors of that state. The events of the latter part of the century were conducive to the creation of what amounted to a consensus of opinion among the imperialist and Western politicians, with the cooperation of Western Jewish capital and anti-Semites everywhere in favour of Zionism and the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine.

THE RISE OF IMPERIAL INTERESTS IN PALESTINE

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the Western powers’ interest in the Arab area intensified as the aging Ottoman Empire became increasingly dependent on the European powers, which obtained privileges, footholds and spheres of influence within the Empire itself. These powers sought to establish direct links with the various populations and religious sects in the area. Thus, eventually France was to become the protector of the Catholic communities in Syria, Lebanon and Palestine while the Orthodox Christians came under Russian protection.

It was during his Palestinian campaign (1799) that Napoleon, motivated by his war needs and later on by his ambition to attract the loyalty of the Jews as agents throughout the world, issued his call for the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem and the “return” of the Jews to Palestine for political purposes. The campaign itself aroused British interest in Palestine as it posed a threat to the British overland route to India. When Muhammad Ali of Egypt embarked on his ambitious plan to modernize Egypt and build a strong independent state comprising Egypt, Greater Syria and the Arab Peninsula during the first decades of the nineteenth century, the British government adopted a course of direct military intervention and was instrumental in driving the armies of Ibrahim Pasha (son of Muhammad Ali) back to Egypt.

Muhammad Ali’s advance into Syria opened the Syrian Question. New British policies were formulated as a result. One of the keys to the new

approach was Palestine, the Jews a prominent part of its spearhead. In 1838 the British decided to station a British consular agent in Jerusalem and in the following year opened the first European consulate in that city. During the 1840's and the 1850's the British government, which had no protégés of its own, established a connection with the Jews in Palestine (around 9700 in all), the Druze in Lebanon and the new Protestant Churches. "Behind the protection of trade and religious minorities there lay the major political and strategic interests of the powers."¹

From its start British presence in Palestine was associated with the promotion of Jewish interests. "This question of British protection of Jews became, however, and remained for many years the principal concern of the British Consulate in Jerusalem."²

The formulation and framework of British imperial policy in the area was best drawn out by its architect, Foreign Secretary Viscount Palmerston. In a letter to the British Ambassador at Constantinople explaining why the Ottoman Sultan should encourage Jewish immigration to Palestine, Palmerston wrote: "... the Jewish people if returning under the sanction and protection and at the invitation of the Sultan would be a check upon any future evil designs of Muhammad Ali or his successor."³

It is remarkable indeed that Palmerston used the term Jewish people in reference to racial-religious unity, as there were no other bonds between the Jews at a time when even prominent Jews were speaking of Jewish "communities," and when the Jewish assimilationist movement, the "Haskalah," was making headway. Also noteworthy was the use of the word "returning" as if history stood still for two thousand years, and the adoption of religious memories as a title deed with utter disregard, nay in studied direct opposition to, the will of the inhabitants of the land. All this preceded the conversion of the father of Zionism to Zionism and the official birth of the movement by more than half a century. Nor was Palmerston's concept a bolt in the sky of British imperial policy. This particular idea of erecting a human barrier, a colonial Jewish settler-state, in Palestine to serve imperial interests under the cover of a variety of moral pretensions, was shared and upheld by a

¹ Albert Hourani, "Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables," in *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East: The Nineteenth Century*, eds., William Polk and Richard Chambers (Chicago, 1968), pp. 41-68.

² Albert Hyamson, *The British Consulate in Jerusalem in Relation to the Jews of Palestine, 1838-1914* (London, 1939-1941), Part I, p. xxxiv.

³ Viscount Palmerston to Viscount Ponsonby, August 11, 1840, F.O. 78/390 (N. 134), Public Record Office.

number of prominent British imperialist Prime Ministers, statesmen, military leaders and adventurers alike. These included Palmerston, Shaftesbury, Colonel Gawler, Disraeli, Rhodes, Colonel C.H. Churchill, Lawrence Oliphant, Joseph Chamberlain, General Smuts,⁴ A.J. Balfour and W. Churchill to name but a few.

Many of these patrons of Zionism were not philo-Semites, as is sometimes assumed. Balfour's pro-Zionist stance was initiated by Herzl's argument before a British Royal Commission on the immigration of Jews to Britain (1902) that diverting the Jews to Palestine was the solution to that British problem. Lawrence Oliphant provides a very clear-cut case of the contradiction between the moral and idealistic pretensions of gentile Zionists and the actual imperialist motivation of their "sympathies" and schemes. According to Oliphant's biographer, the man "shared much of the facile anti-Semitism of his time."⁵ A more recent example is provided by President Richard Nixon, who provided more arms and money to Israel than all the preceding American Presidents combined and who, according to press reports about the "White House tapes," was not above derisory remarks about Jews in his private counsels.

The British imperialist plan did not sprout immediately and had to await the rains of wider imperialist interest in the area; these accompanied the winds of the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the British occupation of Cyprus and Egypt in the seventies and eighties respectively, in addition to the gathering storms of two almost simultaneous European developments. The first was the spread of anti-Semitism in Eastern and, later, Western Europe.

The growth of Western influence "caused the Western Jewish communities to play an increasingly important role in the Holy Land."⁶ This role was conceived within the confines of these interests under the protection of the privileges (capitulations) granted by the Sultan to the Western powers and financed as well as guided by rich Western Jews closely associated with the ruling circles in the West.

The first organizations to promote the proposed colonization programme were British and inspired by the Palmerston-Shaftesbury line of thought: "The British and Foreign Society for promoting the Restoration of the Jewish Nation to Palestine", "The Association for Promoting Jewish

⁴ See R. Stevens, *Weizmann and Smuts* (Beirut: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 1976).

⁵ See Philip Henderson, *The Life of Lawrence Oliphant, Traveller, Diplomat, and Mystic* (London: Robert Hale, 1956).

⁶ Ben Halpern, *The Idea of a Jewish State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), p. 107.

Settlements in Palestine”, “The Society for the Promotion of Jewish Agricultural Labour in the Holy Land.” The *Jewish Chronicle* was established at this time and became “an important vehicle for the popularization of Palestine colonization in Jewish circles.”⁷ In 1861 the “London Hebrew Society for the Colonization of the Holy Land,” and the French “Alliance” established the Agricultural School “Mikveh Israel” near Jaffa, obviously aiming at the settlement of Jews in Palestine on a considerable scale. Prof. R. Stevens explained this surge of new French interest thus: “Following the Crimean War there was generally a renewed interest in extending French influence in the Levant, and various political writers championed not only the protection of an autonomous and Christian province of Lebanon but also an autonomous Jewish province of Palestine.”⁸

At that stage several British writers wrote pamphlets or other works promoting the idea of Jewish settlement in Palestine. Byron’s “Hebrew Melodies,” George Eliot’s “Daniel Deronda” and Disraeli’s “Tancred” conveyed a romantic touch, and stimulated public acceptance of the self-interested British-inspired idea of a Jewish “return” to Palestine.

These Western attitudes and efforts provided the necessary background for the emergence of Zionism. We already alluded to some European developments in the second half of the nineteenth century which provided the necessary conditions of birth for Zionism and encouraged it in Jewish minds as if it was a natural and inner-motivated Jewish development. These were the direct and indirect result of the intellectual and political growth of European chauvinist nationalism. It was no accident that the first proponent of the Jewish national idea as a modern creed, Moses Hess (1812-1875), entitled his book “Rome and Jerusalem” (published 1862) in direct reference to the nationalist movement in Italy; in the book he embraced the racial concepts and the pseudo-scientific racist theories of the nineteenth century. Hess stressed that Jews should avoid assimilation and reassert their uniqueness by “reconstituting their national centre in Palestine.” For all his attempt to present his ideas in rational and logical terms Hess, like most other Zionist thinkers, betrays the intrinsic superstitious and messianic traits in what is often otherwise non-religious Zionism, when he speaks of the imminent victory of the Jewish idea, thus heralding the “Sabbath of History.”

⁷ A. Taylor, *The Zionist Mind* (Beirut: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 1974).

⁸ Richard Stevens, *Zionism and Palestine Before the Mandate* (Beirut: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 1972), p. 6.

It was not the immediate impact of "Rome and Jerusalem" that is of primary historical importance, but rather the intellectual and political climate that produced it, although it was no minor contribution itself to the formation of the Zionist mind. To the intellectual and political founders of Zionism, the "realpolitik" of European statesmen was of tremendous influence, that of Bismark a virtual inspiration.

The second European development which pushed the Zionist idea to the fore proved to be the anti-Semitic pogroms of Russia in 1881. These pogroms set a mass exodus of Jews to Eastern and Western Europe into motion and brought about the collapse of the Haskalah assimilationist movement. Its place was taken by a new movement "Hibbath Zion" (the Love of Zion), which was inspired by Leo Pinsker's pamphlet "Auto-Emancipation" (1882). Societies were formed in Jewish centres where the question of settling in Palestine as an immediate and practical prospect, and the revival of Hebrew as a living language, were discussed. The first Jewish colonists belonged to an organization of Russo-Jewish students, formed at Kharkov for the specific purpose of colonizing Palestine, known as Bilu.

Despite the sprouting of colonial-oriented Jewish organizations no central leadership emerged. The flow of Jewish immigrants into Western Europe brought with it anti-Semitism as well as the keen interest of the prominent Jews of the West in the fate of the Jews of Eastern Europe. The famous ultra-rich Jewish family, the Rothschilds, provided the financial backbone for the endeavour to minimize Jewish immigration to Western Europe and divert it instead to Palestine so as to avoid the dire consequences of anti-Semitism on the one hand, and align Jewry to the expansive imperialist interests in the "Middle East" in the post-Suez era.⁹ A young Viennese journalist, Theodor Herzl, was to provide the political and organizational leadership of the new movement.

What converted Herzl from indifference to his Jewishness to active Zionism was the anti-Semitic Dreyfus Affair (1894). In 1896 he published his book *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State) which aroused the interests of Jewish activists from various parts of the Western world. The book dealt with the situation of the Jews and argued that only through the attainment of statehood on a land purely of their own could the "Jewish Question" be solved. In the following year Herzl was able to convene the First Zionist

⁹ The Rothschilds themselves were extremely involved in the Suez Canal. It was Disraeli, with money from the Rothschilds, who acquired the British share in the Suez holding company which later brought about British invasion of Egypt.

Congress at Basle (August 1897) and bring into being the World Zionist Organization. Herzl was elected president of the new movement and its carefully worded programme declared that the aim of Zionism was a “publicly recognized, legally secured homeland in Palestine,” to be achieved through organization, colonization and negotiation under the umbrella of the imperialist powers.

Herzl’s Zionism was an outcome of the “Jewish Question” and of his vision of the solution of that problem within the framework of alliance with the dominant imperialist powers, a vision which was moulded by the ideologies of nationalist-cum-racist European movements and societies. To Herzl these societies were permanently incapable of tolerating the Jew, who was alienated from them by his apartness and non-conformism. This, to him, was the basis of anti-Semitism as well as of the rootlessness of the Jew. The solution could not possibly be the reform of these societies through such notions as freedom and equality, nor the loss of Jewish identity and apartness, but rather the realization of conformity on “a national basis” and the alignment of the proposed Jewish national state with the European powers. Their umbrella and patronage would be necessary for bringing about the state as well as protecting it thereafter, in return for services rendered against third parties.

The relationship between the European powers and the proposed Zionist settler state was conceived on an imperialist-colonialist basis. This underlying fact notwithstanding, Zionist colonialism had “nuances” of its own, which in turn render it more anomalous. The first of these nuances was that while the European colonialists were an extension of an already established national identity and state, the Jewish colonialists sought to forge a nation, or a national identity, through the colonization act itself.

Unlike the other nation-seeking movements, this was to be based on religion, as they did not speak one single common language nor did they have social norms and continued historical experience in common.¹⁰ In order to make itself more viable to the European mind, Zionism claimed the racial unity of the Jews, thus adding pseudo-science to the anachronistic concept of building a religious nation-state. Another characteristic was that Zionism, while endeavouring to secure the enthusiastic patronage of the most powerful or most interested of the Western powers, based itself on the consensus of Western and imperialist powers through and through. It sought and

¹⁰ For a thorough discussion of the subject see Godfrey Jansen, *Zionism, Israel and Asian Nationalism* (Beirut: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 1971), pp. 12-79.

procured benefit from inter-imperialist competition in contradistinction with other colonial settler-states. The last of these nuances was an ideologically-powered one, namely that Zionism sought to expel the “natives” as a basic strategy and called for a “purely” Jewish national state rather than a settler state in which the minority exploited the majority.

Any thorough examination of the writings and guiding lines of Zionist theory and action reveals the overriding and dynamic impact of imperialist thought and colonial modus operandi, as well as the dominant racist influence of nineteenth century Europe.

To illustrate this, I propose here to establish Herzl’s outlook and methods regarding the basic concepts and issues involved in the imperialist-Zionist alliance, with occasional reference to his successors to point out the consistency and continuity of Zionist strategy and tactics. It will be observed how influential and crucial were Palmerston’s proposals and thoughts, as well as the climate of British imperialist and European racist thought, on the subject of creating a Jewish settler state in Palestine.

1. *Outlook*

The fundamental concepts underpinning Herzl’s thought and Zionist outlook are to be found in *Der Judenstaat*:

Supposing His Majesty the Sultan were to give us Palestine, we could in return undertake to regulate the whole finances of Turkey. We should there form a portion of the rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism. We should as a neutral state remain in contact with all Europe, which would have to guarantee our existence.¹¹

The same theme recurs, appropriately enough, in Herzl’s address to the First Zionist Congress: “It is more and more to the interest of the civilized nations and of civilization in general that a cultural station be established on the shortest road to Asia. Palestine is this station and we Jews are the bearers of culture who are ready to give our property and our lives to bring about its creation.”¹²

Twenty-one years later, Herzl’s prominent successor Chaim Weizmann was to explain the contemplated Zionist plan to the British imperialist statesman most readily associated with Zionism, Arthur James Balfour: “a community of four to five million Jews in Palestine . . . from which the Jews could radiate out into the Near East . . . But all this pre-supposes free and unfettered

¹¹ Theodor Herzl, *The Jewish State* (London, 1946), p. 30. For Herzl’s general thought, see also *The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, ed. R. Patai, trans. Harry Zohn (New York, London: Herzl Press and Thomas Yoseloff, 1960).

¹² Quoted in Jansen, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

development of the Jewish National Home in Palestine, not mere facilities for colonization.”¹³

This concept did not only echo Palmerston’s proposal but also responded to the rising Western needs in the area after the opening of the Suez Canal, British occupation of Egypt and the First World War. The gist of British strategic thought was spelt out in a memorandum by the General Staff at the (British) War Office: “The creation of a buffer Jewish State in Palestine, though this State will be weak in itself, is strategically desirable for Great Britain . . .”¹⁴

2. *Basic Strategy: The Imperialist Umbrella*

The Basle Programme, formulated by the First Zionist Congress, determined that “The aim of Zionism is to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public law.” A reading of Herzl’s diaries as well as an examination of subsequent Zionist action would reveal that the term public law refers to the patronage of the imperialist powers. This patronage was deemed necessary in more ways than one. Herzl sought a colonial concession with explicit and public imperial backing, as this would establish his credibility among the Jews themselves¹⁵ as well as secure that protection for the venture which would make it viable. Herzl envisaged that the European powers would back Zionism for one of three main motives: imperialist self-interest, ridding themselves of Jews and thus of anti-Semitism (in West Europe’s case, avoiding the influx of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe), and using organized Jewish influence to combat revolutionary movements.

Herzl first turned to the German Kaiser, as the “one man who would understand my plan.”¹⁶ This was so not merely because of the German cultural influence within Zionist ranks but because Germany was bent on pushing its way towards the “Drang Nach Osten” imperialist policy: “German policy has taken an Eastern course, and there is something symbolic about the Kaiser’s Palestine journey [of 1898] in more than one sense. I am, therefore, more firmly convinced than ever that our movement will receive help whence I have patiently been expecting it for the past two years. By now

¹³ “Note on the Interview with Mr. Balfour,” December 4, 1918, F.O. 371/3385. PRO.

¹⁴ “The Strategic Importance of Syria to the British Empire,” General Staff, War Office, December 9, 1918, F.O. 371/4178. PRO.

¹⁵ *Diaries, op. cit.*, pp. 223, 240, 241 and 445.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

it is clear that the settlement of the shortest route to Asia by a neutral [among Europeans] national element could also have a certain value for Germany's Oriental policy."¹⁷

In a draft letter to the Kaiser, Herzl later explained the Zionist aim and its use to Germany's Oriental policy, that the Jews were the only European colonialists ready and willing to settle Palestine as the land was poor, and that Palestine must be settled as it occupied a strategic position. Europe, he added, "would more readily permit settlement to the Jews. Perhaps not so much because of the historic right guaranteed in the most sacred book of mankind, but because of the inclination, present in most places, to let the Jews go."¹⁸

This last argument was his passway to M. de Plehwe, the anti-Semitic Russian Minister of Interior (1903), who endorsed the Zionist idea.¹⁹ Yet it was inevitable that London rather than other capitals would become the centre of gravity.²⁰ Britain was the major imperialist power most interested in the future of Palestine as it had possessions in the neighbouring countries as well as an interest in the overland route to India. There Herzl approached the arch-imperialist Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain, through the good offices of Lord Rothschild, whom Herzl described as "the greatest effective force that our people has had since its dispersion."²¹ In his *Diaries*, Herzl described Chamberlain as "the famous master of England."²² During his interview with the British Colonial Secretary (October 1902) Herzl's voice trembled as he was explaining his proposal for an Anglo-Zionist partnership involving British colonial concessions for the Jews in Cyprus, el Arish and the Sinai Peninsula to serve as a "rallying point for the Jewish people in the vicinity of Palestine."²³ To Chamberlain and to Lord Lansdowne, the Foreign Secretary, Herzl explained that by patronizing the Zionist endeavour the British Empire would not only "be bigger by a rich colony," but that also ten million Jews "will all wear England in their hearts if through such a deed it becomes the protective power of the Jewish people. At one stroke England will get ten million secret but loyal subjects active in all walks of life all over the world. At a signal, all of them will place themselves at the service of the magnanimous nation that brings long-desired help... England will get ten

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 639-40.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 642.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1535.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 276.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1302.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 1360.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 1362.

million agents for her greatness and her influence. And the effect of this sort of thing usually spreads from the political to the economic.”²⁴ Herein lay the Zionist *quid pro quo*: for the power that undertook to be universal protector, they offered the Jews as universal agents and the Jewish settler state as a client state.

Herzl’s efforts in England included soliciting the backing of the major colonialist figures, foremost amongst whom was Cecil Rhodes. In a letter explaining his interest, Herzl wrote that although his project did not involve Africa but a piece of Asia Minor, “had this been on your path, you would have done it yourself by now.”²⁵ Why then did Herzl turn to him, the Zionist leader rhetorically asked? “Because it is something colonial”²⁶ was the answer. What Herzl sought was a Rhodes certificate for colonial viability and desirability: “I, Rhodes, have examined this plan and found it correct and practicable,” and quite good for England, for Greater Britain.

Rhodes died before Herzl got what he wanted. Fifteen years later, Herzl’s successor Weizmann obtained from the British imperialists what Herzl could not possibly have obtained from his British sympathizers, namely imperialist patronage and protection for a Jewish National Home in the form of the Balfour Declaration (November 2, 1917). International endorsement (public law) followed as the Zionists obtained endorsement of the other Powers, and the Declaration was incorporated in the Palestine Mandate against the will of the Arab Palestinian people, who constituted the overwhelming majority of the population of Palestine.²⁷

At a later stage the Zionists obtained US patronage for statehood, which was endorsed by “public law” in the form of the Palestine Partition Plan (1947), followed by the Tripartite Declaration of the major imperialist powers (US, Britain and France) guaranteeing the expanded Zionist state in 1950. The United Nations Resolution of November 1975 regarding Zionism as a form of racism was the beginning of a reversal of this situation.

3. *Basic Tactics*

Zionism sought self-fulfilment through mobilizing the Jews, negotiations with the imperialist powers and colonization.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 1365-66.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1194.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ For a detailed history of Palestinian Arab resistance to Zionism and imperialism, see Abdul-Wahab Kayyali, *Tarikh Filastin al-Hadith* (Modern History of Palestine), Beirut, The Arab Institute for Research and Publishing, 1970.

The primary mobilizing force acting in favour of Zionism was anti-Semitism, which, as we have seen, attracted gentile politicians to the Zionist fold. Herzl referred to this in the following terms: "No great exertion will be necessary to stimulate the immigration movement. The anti-Semites are already taking care of this for us."²⁸

This was so true that a prominent "spiritual" Zionist, Ahad Ha'am, said of Herzlian Zionism that it was "the product of anti-Semitism and is dependent on anti-Semitism for its existence."²⁹ The Grand Duke of Baden told Herzl, who reported without objecting, that "people regarded Zionism as a species of anti-Semitism."³⁰

Another means of mobilizing Jewish opinion was the appeal to Jewish complexes through certain Jewish notions, most notably the notion of the "chosen people." In the racist climate of nineteenth century Europe, this was transformed to sound like the notion of the "white man's burden," and tied to the concept of the "Promised Land," and the promise of "return," despite the fact that the leading Zionists were either non-religious or downright agnostics. Moses Hess maintained that "Every Jew has the makings of a Messiah, every Jewess that of a Mater Dolorosa." Ahad Ha'am stated that "we feel ourselves to be the aristocracy of history." Herzl declared that "our race is more efficient in everything than most other peoples of the earth."³¹ In 1957 Ben Gurion asserted the same notion. "I believe in our moral and intellectual superiority to serve as a model for the redemption of the human race."³²

The second means, the negotiations with the imperialists, involved stressing the common interests against third parties as the basis of partnership, and the use of deception and graft. During his negotiations with Chamberlain over Jewish colonization of Cyprus, Herzl betrayed his colonialist outlook and method: "Once we establish the Jewish Eastern Company, with five million pounds capital, for settling Sinai and El-Arish, the Cypriots will begin to want that golden rain on their island, too. The Muslims will move away, the Greeks will gladly sell their lands at a good price and migrate to Athens or Crete."³³

²⁸ *Diaries, op. cit.*, p. 152.

²⁹ A. Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea, A Historical Analysis and Reader* (New York: Doubleday and Herzl Press, 1959), p. 24.

³⁰ *Diaries, op. cit.*, p. 657.

³¹ Quoted in Jansen, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34.

³² David Ben Gurion in *Forum*, No. 3, 1957, pp. 20-38.

³³ See *Diaries, op. cit.*, pp. 70, 322, 568, 1362.

The colonization process revealed an even more telling feature of the nature of Zionism. The names and purposes of the early colonization instruments read as follows: “The Jewish Colonial Trust” (1898), the “Colonization Commission” (1898), the “Palestine Land Development Company.” From the start the Zionist colonists sought to acquire lands in strategic locations, evict the Arab peasants and boycott Arab labour, all of which were requirements closely related with the essence of Zionism, the creation of a Jewish nation on “purely” Jewish land, as Jewish as England was English to use the famous Zionist expression.³⁴ The same notion was clearly implied by Palmerston’s concept of a Jewish buffer state in Palestine. Here again these Zionist “traditions” owe their origins to Herzl and his racist-colonial mind: “The voluntary expropriation will be accomplished through our secret agents. . . we shall then sell only to Jews, and all real estate will be traded only among Jews.”³⁵

What about the fate of the natives? “We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our own country . . . The property owners will come to our side. Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly.”³⁶

But before spiriting them away Herzl had some jobs for the local population: “If we move into a region where there are wild animals to which the Jews are not accustomed — big snakes, etc . . . I shall use the natives, prior to giving them employment in the transit countries, for the extermination of the animals.”³⁷

When he later discovered that the Zionist colonies needed large-scale drainage operations he decided to use the Arabs, for a fever attacked the workers and he did not want to expose the Zionists to such dangers.³⁸

In the wake of the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917, Weizmann lost no time in facing the British with the facts of imperialist life in Palestine as early as 1919: “Will the British apply self-determination in Palestine, which is five hours from Egypt, or not? If not it will have to be coerced . . . Yes or no: it amounts to that.”³⁹ On this point as on many other issues Weizmann found himself on the same platform as the major British imperialist politicians.⁴⁰

³⁴ See Kayyali, *op. cit.*

³⁵ *Diaries, op. cit.*, p. 89.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 740-741.

³⁹ May 10, 1919, Central Zionist Archives Z/16009.

⁴⁰ See Balfour to Prime Minister, February 19, 1919, F.O. 371/4179.

It would be enlightening to quote here a few paragraphs from the perceptive study by Jay Gonen (an Israeli scholar) of “the Arab problem” in his new book: “From the very beginning of the Zionist endeavour most Zionists displayed a blind spot in their view of the Arabs, a blind spot that was a total lack of vision and later became distorted vision.”⁴¹ They referred to the Arabs in derogatory, racist terms, and were convinced “that the Arabs understood only the language of force, a bias that persisted for many years and became especially pronounced after the Holocaust.”⁴² The Israelis, furthermore, are convinced “that physical force is the only tangible political reality which carries weight and is significant in the affairs of nations . . . current Israeli political vision is mostly conceptualized in terms of tanks, jets.”⁴³

Golda Meir’s absurd rhetoric of June 15, 1969 when she inquired assertively, “who are the Palestinians? There is no such thing,” is no strange thing in the Zionist context.⁴⁴ The Koenig report⁴⁵ is merely the most recent manifestation, by no means the most extreme, of Zionist attitudes towards the Arabs of Palestine.

It would be both erroneous and dangerous, however, to think that these Zionist attitudes towards the Palestinian Arabs are divorced from the wider context of imperialist and Zionist attitudes vis-à-vis Arab unity and the Arab future as a whole. On several occasions Herzl sought to present Zionism as the political meeting point between Christianity and Judaism in their common stance against Islam and the “barbarism” of the Orient. A thorough reading of Herzl reveals that to him as well as to other imperialists the term Islam was a reference to the Arabs and to no other Islamic people. This became more evident when the Zionists allied themselves with the Ottoman Revolution of 1908 “in their common battle against the incipient Arab national movement and Arab independence.”⁴⁶ In 1919, in a secret meeting attended by Weizmann and a number of high-ranking British officials the matter was very frankly discussed. Ormsby-Gore, who later became Colonial Secretary and therefore effective ruler of Palestine, accepted Weizmann’s arguments and was in favour of granting his requests. He was in favour of encouraging non-

⁴¹ Jay Gonen, *Psychohistory of Zionism* (New York: Mason Charter, 1975), p. 182.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 180.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

⁴⁴ Zionist propaganda had previously circulated the totally deceptive motto “A land without a people, for a people without a land,” in reference to Palestine and the Jews.

⁴⁵ *Al Hamishmar*, September 7, 1976.

⁴⁶ See Kayyali, *op. cit.*, Chapter 2.

Muslims, Europeans and Jews, to develop and stabilize the Near East in view of the fact that Islam was the main danger. Since the Zionist Organization provided the required human element to man the Palestinian outpost in Europe's fight against Islam: "It is the interest of England to assist the Zionist Organization and any other organization which may cooperate with them in the practical development of Jewish colonization in Palestine."⁴⁷

The idea of Balkanization was drawn out in the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916) and implemented in the post-war division of the Arab lands. Zionism, however, continued to work for the creation of smaller sectarian states, in cooperation this time with the French imperialists. During the thirties a Zionist [Weizmann] rapprochement with the pro-French Maronite leaders in the Lebanon took place. In 1941, as the Zionists began to push for declaring their state, an associate of Ben Gurion, Berl Katznelson stated: "We should say to the Arab peoples: in us, Jews, you see an obstacle in your way toward independence and unification. We do not deny it."⁴⁸ The attack on Egypt in 1956 following the nationalization of Western interests in the Suez Canal, and the assault on Arab nationalism in 1967 were the fulfilment of a relationship between local Zionist interests and Western powers that had been envisaged at the birth of Zionism.

⁴⁷ May 10, 1919, C.Z.A. Z/16009.

⁴⁸ Gonen, *op. cit.*, p. 186.