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PALESTINE IN THE HISTORY OF DECOLONIZATION*

1. The initial shock

Decolonization is now widely known as a historic process that culminated when vast areas of the world cast off the yoke of Western colonial domination, especially at the political level, in the aftermath of the Second World War. Concepts of independence and national self-determination forged in Europe in previous centuries were revived by nationalist elites to articulate the profound aspirations of peoples in the colonial areas. The political movements led by these elites merged with one of two Western ideologies - Wilsonian democracy or Marxist radicalism - which provided them with moral and material support as well as a conceptual framework.

Western democracy had many faces. Despite various contradictions, that ideology managed to come to terms with colonial domination, which was mainly political in relation to Europe and economic on the part of the United States. The First World War exposed its contradictions. In Europe, the enormous human loss among the belligerents had raised many questions about the real motives of the ruling classes who had unleashed the great massacre, the sincerity of their reciprocal denunciations, and the incongruity between their policies and the great moral principles each accused the other of violating. Independently of the European Powers, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, who based his ideology on socialist but more specifically Marxist criticism, and Thomas Woodrow Wilson, who based his on the tradition of democratic thought, were able to pin the European Powers (or the imperialists as each thinker called them) in the trap formed by their own declarations of principle. 1/

As an opponent of the war in Europe, which he wished to transform into a civil war, Lenin denounced all the belligerents as imperialists, exploiters and

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oppressors alike. In his programme for peace among nations, he recalled his polemic against Rosa Luxemburg in exhuming a resolution from the 1896 London Socialist and International Trade Union Congress, which endorsed the right to complete self-determination of all nations. 2/ When the Bolsheviks took power in Russia during November 1917, their first declaration to the nations at war proclaimed that principle. Wilson responded to this declaration of principle by casting aside both its summary denunciation of the two belligerent camps and its revolutionary social potential in order to apply it, beyond a clear indictment of imperial Germany, to a new order based on reason, morality and faith - or ideal principles that would generate international institutions and lasting peace. 3/ In view of the decisive nature of the American intervention in the war, he hoped to impose the new order on European Governments eager to reap the benefits of their victory by mobilizing the liberals in Europe. At the core of his idealism was the recognition that the checks imposed on Europe would necessarily benefit the United States, given its vantage point of arbitrator as assigned by the American President. On 8 January 1918, Wilson proclaimed before Congress that the era of conquests and secret treaties had ended, and that it was necessary to create a world "made fit and safe to live in; and particularly ... made safe for every peace-loving nation which, like our own, wishes to live its own life, determine its own institutions, be assured of justice and fair dealing by other peoples of the world against force and selfish aggression". 4/ However, in the famous 14 points which followed, he offered a somewhat ambiguous formulation on the overseas possessions of his allies, the colonial Powers:

"A free, open-minded and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon a strict observance of the principle that in determining all such questions of sovereignty, the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the Government whose title is to be determined" (point V). 5/

Wilson clearly was seeking a global reshaping of all territorial boundaries. He went into detail with respect to the territory of the victor and that of the vanquished. Within the context of self-determination of peoples, he stated in point XII:

"The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development ..." 6/

2. The question of Palestine in 1918

Among those "nationalities" were the Arab people of Asia, including Palestinians. Although one does not like to emphasize their background of dependency, Arab nationalism viewed British colonization as merely the successor to Ottoman colonization. Such affirmations are not completely untrue, but they must be qualified considerably: Arabs and several other peoples in the Ottoman Empire were not colonized according to the type of colonialism that was prevalent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; in principle, the Ottoman Empire was not a

Turkish empire but a multiracial and multidenominational Muslim empire with sovereigns of Turkish origin, who claimed the function of supreme heads of the community of Muslim believers without ethnic distinction. Regardless of ethnic origin, the predominant class consisted of Muslims. The Turks, over whom the sovereigns reigned, were privileged, to be sure; but the other Muslim peoples could not be regarded as the vassals of any sovereign ethnic group. Many of their members also belonged to the dominant class of administrators and political officers. Still others were distinguished by a title of one kind or another.

In the Arab territories of the Ottoman Empire, including Palestine, the idea that a people should be master of its destiny had long been dormant and inhibited by the unrealistic nature of that prospect, but began slowly to gain currency. In many sectors of the society, particularly among the Muslims, the idea of a multiracial Ottoman nation centred on the dominant ideology of Islam. Only in that context was the demand for more Arab egalitarianism envisaged; the 1908 revolution of the Young Turks and its subsequent changes further accentuated the Turks' predominance in the Empire, while contradictorily providing the other ethnic groups with platforms and possibilities for greater protest. Some Muslims dreamed of taking a more definitive step towards creating a vast pan-Islamic empire. The idea of an Arab nation also made headway in the minds of the elites, and even of the masses.

The Great Arab Revolution led by Al-Sherif Hussain Bin Ali in Hegaz in 1916 embodied the Arab yearning for independence and unity in the early days of this century. The central objective of that revolution was the attainment of Arab independence from Ottoman rule and unity of the Arabs. This objective was the core of the Hussain-McMahon correspondence in the two-year period 1914-1916. It was only because of the British designs to exclude Palestine and other Arab territories from the envisaged unified Arab State that these contacts came to naught. Furthermore, Al-Sherif Hussain Bin Ali movement was undermined and he personally, also, was let down by the British because he refused to forfeit the Arab right in Palestine by accepting the Balfour Declaration. Consequently, Al-Sherif Hussain died in exile as a result of his firm resistance to all intrigues designed to slash out Palestine from the Arab world.

At the same time, the Arabs of the Ottoman Empire, like all other inhabitants of the realm, resented the hegemony of the European Powers. It was clear to everyone that they often dictated their law to the Empire. They posed obvious obstacles to the quest for self-determination. Their penetration, in diverse forms, often clashed with community sensitivities by destroying the traditional way of life.

Palestine had another problem, that of political Zionism, which had been proclaiming its objective of transforming Arab Palestine into a Jewish homeland since 1897. Of course, to some extent, the early Zionists had shelved their project for a Jewish State and their small numbers did not yet seem a serious threat. However, from the start of the 1900s many observers, particularly among the Palestinians, the group most directly affected, detected clear signs of Jewish determination to realize a Jewish State in the region, according to the plan set forth by Herzl, even though its chances for success appeared remote indeed.

In short, an Arab State in the Fertile Crescent would not have emerged without a profound transformation in the Ottoman Empire, if not its fall, in addition to a de facto elimination of the pan-Islamic concept. It would have needed enough strength to prevent itself from being dictated to by a European colonial empire, or by the West with its technical, cultural and political hegemony. Moreover, it would have had to remove the threat posed by a fulfilment of Zionist plans.

This range of real or potential adversaries naturally provoked much contemplation on how to play one group against the other. The Ottoman Empire constituted the existing political structure; toppling it seemed feasible with the assistance of one or another of the Western Powers. Zionism itself represented an assertive nationalist force which had powerful means at its disposal and which encouraged the belief that still more powerful means were available to it. Certain Ottoman, especially Turkish, politicians pondered an alliance with Zionism.

Thus, the question of colonization and decolonization was particularly complex in relation to Palestine. It is possible to play upon this complexity, even to the point of exaggeration. But it is not very difficult to discuss the problem's general outlines, simple as they are.

What is colonial status if not the fact that one people is dominated by another, while the political decisions which concern it are taken by others? What is decolonization other than the termination of such a state of affairs, the assumption or resumption of decision-making by a people over its own internal and external affairs? The only acceptable limits are those determined by the people's legitimate authorities and by the unavoidable constraints that result from the interdependence of nations, especially in the economic sphere.

For the Palestinians, the problem was simply to determine how and within what framework they could rid themselves of the forces which had denied, or threatened to deny, their self-determination, that is, the Ottoman Empire, the imperialist Powers, and the Zionist institutions. This would be the content of the process of decolonization, as it was in other countries where the problem arose in a simple manner. Moreover, it was recognized formally, if incoherently, by the Covenant of the League of Nations. As Wilson observed:

"Certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone. The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory" (Art. 22, para. 4).

This clause encapsulated all the contradictions of the First World War settlement. The aspirations of all peoples for independence was acknowledged for the first time. But the relationships of power in the world and among the victorious Powers themselves usually led to the perpetuation of colonization, pure and simple, or to disguised colonization in the case of the territories outside Europe that were seized from the defeated Powers. From their mere geographical

location, those territories were typically assumed to be "inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world" (Art. 22, para. 1).

3. Inconsistencies in the settlement of Arab Asia

The desire for independence of the eastern Arab countries under Ottoman rule was underscored by their classification in the "A" Mandate category. Theoretically, this was the recognition of a right which, logically, should have enabled them to escape colonial status. But practice scarcely corresponds to theory. In reality, the same countries were divided between Great Britain and France, described simply as "Mandatory Powers", which were obligated to submit an annual report to the Council of the League of Nations. The Council - the victorious Powers and four other States chosen by the other Members of the League of Nations - exercised a supervisory role in theory. However, contrary to what the Covenant specified, the wishes of the communities of Arab Asia were clearly not "a principal consideration" in the selection of the Mandatories. Wilson alone wished to implement that clause and sent his emissaries, Henry C. King and Charles R. Crane, to the Middle East as chiefs of a commission to record the views of the inhabitants of Syria, Palestine and Iraq over a six-week period during June-July 1919. The vast majority, who were for independence and against the Mandates System, remained ready nevertheless to accept an American mandate, in the event that no way could be found to prevent its implementation. In the absence of any other options a British mandate was also acceptable, although it was feared that Great Britain would be too likely to act as a classic colonial Power. Only a small proportion of the people in the region of lesser Lebanon favoured a French mandate. A large majority opposed the Zionist programme. The report of the King-Crane Commission, submitted at the end of August 1919, was the only expression of any real authority regarding the wishes to the local population in the whole of historic Syria. It was completely ignored. With the United States' withdrawal from the peace settlement, the fate of those countries was decided by the victorious European Powers at San Remo in April 1920. The decisions at that conference are well known: partition of the Arab Near East under French and British hegemony.

For Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Transjordan, the solemnly recognized right to independence took the form of institutions (kingdoms and republics under British or French tutelage, constitutions, legislative elections, parliaments, ministerial cabinets, etc.) that symbolized the perpetuation of that right, and kept alive an ultimate obligation to translate it into reality. Great Britain, wise enough to free Iraq in 1927 from its status as a mandated country, recognized its complete independence and promoted its admission to the League of Nations in 1932, while curtailing that independence through the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930. The British waited until 1946 to grant the same status to Transjordan. France maintained its far more rigid control over Lebanon and Syria, and detached the latter from those regions with a special status. However, it was the parliaments, elected in accordance with the Mandates System, which, by unanimous vote in 1943, annulled the constitutional articles curtailing their States' independence. This development took place amid confrontations in which the relations between regional and world power played a critical role.

4. Colonial status of Palestine

Palestine, alone in the Arab Near East, was not entitled to such institutions. It was a country under mandate and, by that fact, its eligibility for independence was proclaimed as in the case of neighbouring countries. But there were no institutions to prepare the way for that independence. The administrative system derived from that of the British Crown Colonies and Palestine depended on the Colonial Office. Against the will of the local population, the Council of the League of Nations granted Great Britain the Mandate over Palestine under terms analogous to those in Syria, Lebanon and Iraq; but article 2 in the text establishing the Mandate, apparently at the behest of the Mandatory Government itself, made the latter "responsible for placing the country under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish national home". Similarly, article 4 provided that "the Zionist Organization" would be recognized as "an appropriate Jewish agency [which] shall be recognized as a public body for the purpose of advising and co-operating with the Administration of Palestine in such economic, social and other matters as may affect the establishment of the Jewish national home and the interests of the Jewish population in Palestine and, subject always to the control of the Administration, to assist and take part in the development of the country".

The first official High Commissioner that Great Britain appointed to Palestine (in 1920) was a British Jew and a militant Zionist, Herbert Samuel. Not surprisingly, the Palestinian Arabs became highly suspicious of all British policy in their country. In 1922 they were asked to approve a Legislative Council with provisional powers by voting to replace the Advisory Council appointed by the High Commissioner in October 1920 (4 Muslims, 3 Christians, 3 Jews and 10 British officials). However, in addition to the High Commissioner who would serve as presiding officer, the Council was to comprise only 12 members to be elected by a two-tier voting system involving 8 Muslims, 2 Jews, 2 Christians, plus 10 British officials. The Arabs pointed out that they made up 90 per cent of the population and demanded that all members be elected, or at least that Arab members outnumber the British on the Council. Rejected by the British authorities, they boycotted the elections, which were subsequently declared invalid.

The Office of the High Commissioner then decided to re-establish the Advisory Council along different lines. This situation was satisfactory to no one, and the British tried many different arrangements to convey the impression that a representative administration was functioning. Thus, in 1923 they proposed to establish an Arab Agency that would be equivalent to the Jewish Agency. The Palestine Arab Congress dismissed the proposal partly because it put the whole indigenous Arab population on an equal footing with the Jews, who were mainly foreigners, and partly because it implied prior recognition of the Jewish Agency as well as validity of the Balfour Declaration. Nothing ever came of that attempt. From a strategic point of view, the Arab organization mistakenly prevented the establishment of the representative body, for it might have served as a tribunal for the Palestinian population and of its interests, even with fictitious representation. However, it was also quite true that participation in elections was tantamount to acknowledging a fait accompli, the legitimacy of the Mandate which deprived them of their right to self-determination and the promise of a Jewish homeland which threatened their very hold on the land.

Thus, Palestine had no institution which represented its entire population. It remained, or rather fell into, a colonial status, being administered by a foreign Power and lacking the representative institutions which limited powers possessed by other countries that were also governed under class "A" Mandates. It had even lost its parliamentary representation in the political system which had incorporated it and in which it formed only a small segment (as had been the case under the Ottoman Empire after 1908). Whereas, the other Arab countries were under class "A" Mandates, a qualified form of colonial rule, Palestine remained in a strictly colonial situation. The obvious reason was the Balfour Declaration.

The Balfour Declaration is in conflict with article 2 of the Mandate, which prescribed "the development of self-governing institutions" for the entire population (art. 2). However, that provision contradicted the articles calling for co-operation with the Jewish Agency to facilitate Jewish immigration and to grant Jews special rights. A Zionist French lawyer stated this point very clearly in 1932:

"It should be noted ... that the independent government of Palestine to which the Mandate refers cannot be that of the current population of Palestine, with its large Arab majority, because articles 4, 6, 7, 11, 22 and 23 would therefore be unacceptable, at least in their current form." 1/

He was, of course, referring to the articles on immigration, the Jewish Agency, and the special rights of the Jewish minority. Those terms were compatible only with a colonial system that subjected the Palestinian people to rules dictated by another people on behalf of a third people.

5. The struggle for decolonization in Palestine

In their hope of achieving self-determination and decolonization, colonized people generally find themselves confronted with two adversaries: a foreign political Power, which imposes its decisions upon them, and the colons or the foreign inhabitants in their territory, who are protected by the colonial Power and enjoy greater privileges than the indigenous population. The inhabitants may at times be increased by persons who are not citizens of the dominant country but who are often integrated into it by naturalization, special status, or other means (cf. the French in Algeria, the Indians in British East Africa, the Chinese in Malaysia and Indonesia).

Palestine was a special case. Virtually no British citizens were installed there except for the military and civil servants under temporary assignment. There were no English colons, or colonizers. The colonizers, the Jewish settlers, were foreigners both in Palestine and in Britain; like the Indians of East Africa, they definitely constituted an intermediate ethnic stratum, subject to the decisions taken by the dominating nation but enjoying a status higher than that of the indigenous population. The major difference was that, in East Africa, the colonizers treated this intermediary ethnic stratum as a group of transitory immigrants who were destined to remain in a lower status and whose only long-range or permanent option was integration into the indigenous population. Those

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immigrants, moreover, came from their own metropolitan area, India; even though India was also under colonial domination, it was still able to protect its nationals who, in most cases, intended not to break their ties but to return one day to their "homeland".

In Palestine, the intermediary stratum of the population proclaimed its intention to remain forever on the land where it had established itself, to never integrate into the indigenous population and to gain a position of influence if not total supremacy. Britain had committed itself to eventually lifting its control of the country, and its withdrawal would entail the departure of its nationals there. As the intermediate population, the Jewish Yishuv, which was well entrenched and equipped with fully developed institutions for self-government, could not count on permanent support from Great Britain.

On the other hand, the Yishuv enjoyed the support of the majority of Jews dispersed throughout the world and, above all, a public image which, for reasons that are well known, grew increasingly favourable within the Western industrial countries.

Thanks to the outcome of the First World War, the Palestinian Arabs were relieved from Ottoman control, which had become one of the obstacles to self-determination. However, they encountered two new adversaries that were stronger and more dangerous: Great Britain and the Jewish Yishuv. Behind Great Britain loomed the shadow of the developed Western world's political and economic hegemony; the Yishuv, on the other hand, constituted a much more dangerous adversary in the long term. Its members continued to proclaim their determination to remain on the land, to invoke their so-called historical rights to full control of Palestinian land, to mobilize their powerful support throughout the world, and to tighten and expand their control of the land along with the entire economy. They did this despite the fact that their leaders had decided to endorse the White Paper drafted by Winston Churchill in 1922, which limited the Zionist ambitions only slightly; its acceptance was a condition for submitting the text of the Mandate (which the British apparently drew up from a draft by Herbert Samuel) to the League of Nations. 8/ The tactical nature of this acceptance was evident to all.

The Palestinians had to think first and foremost of limiting the Jewish threat and of fighting it by accepting temporary alliances with Great Britain if necessary, or, at the very least, by exerting strong pressure on Great Britain, which for the time being held power in the eyes of accepted international law. The Palestinians had the advantage of being able to press their case through the Arab chieftains, whose public image obliged them to show at least a modicum of solidarity. The Zionist Jews, who had attained their position in Palestine only through British support, could try to increase and prolong that support by showing Britain that they served its interests, or by a combination of enticements and threats. Various factions among the Yishuv fought for the predominance of one or another of these policies.

The British, for their part, weighed the advantages and disadvantages of collaboration with these groups. The advantages and disadvantages varied,

depending on the vicissitudes of international politics. Ideological considerations also played a major role, as had been the case in the process leading to the Balfour Declaration. Originally they had been able to delude themselves about reconciling their various attempts at collaboration with the two parties; but direct exposure to Palestinian realities caused them to quickly realize that they would have to officially limit the prospects of the Yishuv, unless they wished to bring about a catastrophic break with the leaders and masses of the Arab world (and even of certain Muslim countries or communities of vital concern to them, such as the Muslims of India).

All these considerations indicated clearly that the fate of Palestine would be determined by the outcome of negotiations among the three parties. The Palestinian Arabs were only one of the negotiating parties, but the weakest. Moreover, they were represented by leaders who were particularly sensitive to British pressure because of their own stakes as indigenous aristocrats. Such leaders sought to strengthen their position by calling on their counterparts in other Arab countries, who were even more disposed to make large concessions to London in order to safeguard their positions.

Palestine which had just attained independence from Ottoman rule was in the process of being recolonized by the Zionist movement which was flourishing in Palestine under the British Mandate. However, as early as 1891, Palestinian leaders in Jerusalem demanded that Sultan Abdul Hamid II issue a decree forbidding Zionist immigrants from acquiring titles to land. In 1917, the announcement of the Balfour Declaration, was met with widespread Palestinian opposition. In August of 1919, Major J. N. Camp, Assistant Political Officer in Jerusalem, submitted, in his report to London, that "various societies in Jerusalem were in the foreground of the struggle for independence", moreover, they were strongly opposed to "Zionist immigration". Briefly, he concluded, "practically all Moslems and Christians of any importance in Palestine are anti-Zionist and bitterly so". (Quote from E. L. Woodward and Rohan Butler (eds.), Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-39, First Series, vol. IV, London, 1952, p. 361.)

The American "King-Crane Commission" of 1919, which was dispatched to Palestine by President Woodrow Wilson prior to the convening of the proposed Peace Conference, reported in May 1919 that this conference "should not shut its eyes to the fact that the anti-Zionist feeling in Palestine and Syria is intense and not lightly to be flouted". (See Henry N. Howard, The King-Crane Commission: An American Inquiry in the Middle East, Beirut, 1963, p. 345.) This observation was confirmed by the subsequent developments in Palestine. For example, in April 1910, May 1921, August 1929 and October 1933 Palestine was filled by major anti-Zionist and increasingly anti-British demonstrations and uprisings.

Generally, the 1930s witnessed an ascendance of Palestinian political activity whose objective was to stop the Zionist movement from dispossessing the people of Palestine. In that regard, political parties were formed, among them the Independence Party (1932), the National Defense Party (1934) and three others in 1935: Palestine Arab, Arab Reform and the National Block Party. Conjunctionally, guerilla groups emerged. Most prominent among them was a group led by Izz al-Din Al-Qassam. His group started operating in 1931 in the Galilee hills

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under the banner of Arab Unity, Independence, and guided by anti-British and anti-Zionist sentiments. His followers were poor peasants living in urban poverty after having been dispossessed and uprooted by Zionist colonization. Sheikh Izz al-Din Al-Quassam, along with some of his followers, was captured and killed by the British in 1935. (See William Quandt, Fuad Jabber, Ann Mosely Lesch The Politics of Palestinian Nationalism, University of California Press, Berkeley 1973, pp. 5-43; and Walter Lehn, "The Development of Palestinian Resistance", Association of Arab-American University Graduates, Information Papers, No. 14, June, 1974.)

All of these continuous acts of resistance culminated with the 1936-1939 revolt. That revolt was marshalled against the British and their Zionist allies. It started as a massive general strike which was supported by a wide array of political forces. By April 1936, that led to the formation of the Arab Higher Committee (outlawed by the British in October of 1937). That Committee declared that the general strike was to continue until Zionist immigration would come to a halt, thus opening the door for real independence. In June 1937, the British Royal Commission reported: "To put it in one sentence, we cannot in Palestine as it is now - both concede the Arab claim to self-government and secure the establishment of the Jewish National Home". (As quoted in Lehn, p. 8.)

As the revolt continued, in 1937, new guerilla groups inspired by Al-Qassam's example were formed. They challenged British control in areas such as Beersheba, Hebron, Jaffa and Old Jerusalem. One year later, they controlled large areas of Palestine. To quell the revolt, the British High Commissioner was empowered with the Emergency Regulations (1936) which gave virtually absolute power to the government officials, civilian and military, enabling them to suspend all rights and legal safeguards enjoyed by the Palestinians. In 1939, after many attempts to crush the ongoing revolt in Palestine, the revolt did not subside until May 1939 when the British issued a White Paper abandoning partition, restricting Jewish immigration and transfer of land titles to Jews, and declaring Britain's objective to be the establishment of an independent Palestinian State within ten years. (See Lehn, p. 8.)

Palestinian resistance to being rendered dispossessed by the Zionist movement continued through the war years. In fact, it is this resistance which provides the present day resistance of the Palestinian people its historical continuity.

6. Intensified colonization

Whereas frequent demonstrations, strikes, and other types of opposition shook the colonial régime in the neighbouring Arab countries between 1920 and 1939, colonial domination in Palestine was being strengthened. Although the British were increasingly disposed to make concessions, as they did in other Arab countries, they could not easily extricate themselves from the provisions of the Mandate - that is, the power that these provisions gave to Zionist institutions, which in turn intensified Jewish immigration from 1933 onwards. The other Powers and Western public opinion conveniently reminded Great Britain of its obligations to the Jews and insisted on a scrupulous fulfilment of these obligations. Nazi Germany itself followed the trend by facilitating the emigration of German Jews to

Palestine prior to 1939. 9/ All the relevant parties involved, including the Western Jews, thus opted for the easy way out by not taking in a large group of persecuted and often poor Jews.

Palestine, having emerged from the oppressive Ottoman yoke, now found itself the victim of renewed colonization. With the protection of the British Mandate, the Zionist settlers increased from approximately 11 per cent to 32 per cent of Palestine's total population. The institutions of the Yishuv constituted an increasingly close-knit and effective network. They had their own military force, which was strengthened by their forced alliance with the British during the 1936-1939 Palestinian revolt and later in the war against Germany. Like many other groups which had emigrated to remote places, such as the settlers in the American colonies, the Yishuv saw the possibility of obtaining total autonomy from Great Britain. When the Yishuv's most militant organizations fought to achieve that goal, with its most representative institutions leading the movement, the British capitulated.

The withdrawal of the British, as decided in 1947, like their referral of the Palestinian question to the United Nations, did not have an impact like their simultaneous withdrawal from India, their earlier departure from other Arab countries, or like the French withdrawal from Syria and Lebanon during 1943-1945. In contrast to the Syrians, Lebanese and Iraqis, the Palestinians did not become politically independent. Although economic domination by the West had significant consequences, such subjugation was the fate shared by the undeveloped world; but it did not result in an immediate feeling of humiliation and rebellion as was produced by political domination from conspicuous foreigners who managed everybody's life on a day-to-day basis, and in the slightest detail.

It was, however, exactly that type of direct domination that befell a large proportion of the Palestinians, who were becoming second-class citizens in their own country. Through their alien domination, the Jews strengthened their position, imposed their laws, language and culture and taught their own history, which they propagated as the sole "fundamental" and legitimate history of Palestine. Many Palestinians escaped that situation because they lived in areas that were not controlled, were beyond the reach of the armed forces of the new State of Israel, or because they fled the subjugated territory. For the refugees, that forced exile was another consequence of foreign domination. The difficult life the refugees inevitably encountered in the Diaspora was a further consequence of the decisive consolidation of colonization in their homeland. The political condition of Palestinians who remained in villages or towns that had not become part of the new State - or, in other words, who remained in the West Bank, the area whose boundaries had been set by the changing military situation - was also being determined by outside forces as a consequence of additional Palestinian territory being occupied by Israel. This remained the fate of the Palestinian population from 1948 until the 1967 Israeli victory. Because the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, including Jerusalem, acquired the status of occupied territories by falling under direct Israeli domination, the population did not even have the limited access to Israeli political institutions bestowed on Palestinians in Israel.

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It is important to emphasize that the world-wide decolonization process that was taking place did not benefit Palestine. On the contrary, subsequent events and international institutions legitimated and reinforced a colonization that proved to be particularly virulent, combative and effective.

7. Positive aspects

However, this extremely bleak picture does have two positive aspects. First, the progressive decolonization throughout the world had a considerable impact on public opinion everywhere. The resulting wave of public moral censure was of enormous, though by no means unlimited, importance; clearly, it was slow to have any impact on the Palestinian question, since the colonizers represented a fragment of an ethnic/religious group that had won and manipulated the sympathy precisely of that sector of public opinion which was particularly sensitive to anti-colonialism. 10/ The reasons for this are quite clear: the Jews had been victims of one of the most barbarous extermination campaigns in the world for many centuries, and it was merely the culmination of a history in which persecution had been a dominant feature for almost 20 centuries. Among Christians, whose ideology dominated the world, Jews had also acquired an extremely curious status that gave rise to the most extreme feelings of either hatred or love.

It should be remembered that there are many reasons why the Arab world, like the Muslim world, generally has been viewed with contempt by the West. 11/ Furthermore, the socialist countries were sympathetic to the aspirations of the Arab world, a fact which was manipulated by the West. This is due to the current pattern of international relations and resultant strategies; it in no way implies an alignment of particular social, ideological, political or other options. Nevertheless, the very large segment of Western opinion that views the ideology and methods of the socialist countries with antipathy has a tendency to extend this aversion to the Arab world simply because of the political support some Arab States receive from that bloc.

All this serves to explain why the general mood of hostility to colonization reached Palestine very late and why it is still far from winning over sectors of opinion that generally lean towards anti-colonialism. However, world opinion has lately become more aware of the colonial subjugation weighing upon the Palestinian people, and under which they still labour in all the territories dominated by the State of Israel. Because the ideology that legitimates colonization no longer has currency, it follows that Israeli words and actions arouse a hostile reaction each time they smack too obviously of traditional colonialism. From now on, it will be more and more difficult for the Israeli authorities to avoid such incidents, especially in the territories occupied since 1967 and in Lebanon since 1982.

The second positive development in the last few years has been the formation of a nationalism that is specifically Palestinian. The Palestinian population is, of course, a part of the Arab people and, more precisely, of those Arabs who inhabit the large region historically known as Syria (or as ash-Sham in Arabic). Palestine is the southern part of the Syrian region. It has particular features that stem from its geography and its own history and, therefore, a certain

distinctiveness that evolved in the course of history. 12/ Like many other regions, it has constantly oscillated between a relatively isolated life and greater integration in the Syrian region. An infinite number of nuances can be added to this rough appraisal of events: the Arabization of the entire region, its Islamization generally, and the incorporation of Palestine into States or larger administrative districts, tended to accentuate a trend towards integration and to limit its particular features, which none the less have endured.

From this special and continuous process there has emerged a specifically national consciousness as well as nationalist political movements. The movement originally challenging the fate imposed on Palestine was aligned with the general Arab nationalist movement and relied upon the Arab State authorities to defend its cause. Because the Palestine problem was not resolved, the Palestinian movement increasingly set its separate course among the exiles and assumed the management of its own cause. After 1948, the Palestinian people continued their struggle to regain their national rights both under Israeli occupation and in the Diaspora. That continuing struggle in 1964 culminated in the formation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) which elevated the struggle to a more intense and higher level. The different organizations were spurred into establishing a relative unity within the PLO. Their constituency and that of PLO into which they were grouped have expanded gradually from the exiles to all segments of the Palestinian population, including the inhabitants in the territories occupied since 1967 and those in the State of Israel as demarcated by its 1948-1967 borders.

8. Conclusion

The process of colonizing the world by Europe (and later by its colonies) began in the sixteenth century. It may be defined, very roughly, as the establishment of economic and often political hegemony, which culminated in direct domination involving territorial occupation and sometimes large-scale settlement by an alien population. This process - which is far from being unique in history - was partially reversed in the twentieth century. Some territories were entirely transformed by European colonization; the indigenous population was wiped out (as in Tasmania) or reduced to an insignificant minority (as in Australia, the United States of America or Canada). However, the others - where the indigenous population remained the majority despite the presence of a significant number of immigrants (as in Algeria and Rhodesia) - usually managed to eliminate foreign tutelage and achieve political independence, while still vulnerable to the subordination that resulted from the continued hegemony of Europe and a few non-European countries (such as the United States and Japan) in technological, economic and military power. Latin America is a complex case in which political independence of the elite segment of the colonial immigrants was accompanied in the 1920s by a merger between the indigenous population and the immigrants: the large portion of the indigenous population unaffected by that process often remained in a subordinate situation within new, independent political units.

Large areas of Asia outside European political domination or colonization have been subjected to European and American hegemony, at least since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Such was the case of Japan, China, Iran and the Ottoman

Empire. The three latter States included minorities which were subordinated by such dominant ethnic groups as the Hans, the Persians and the Turks. Among the dominated minorities were the non-Muslims of the Ottoman Empire and the Christian and Muslim Arabs of Ottoman Asia, including the Palestinians.

The Arabs of the Ottoman Empire, who formed a subordinated minority but participated more or less in the administration, particularly in Muslim affairs, found themselves caught up in a colonization process at the very time when, in the wake of the 1914-1918 war, colonization was losing much of its ideological legitimacy. The Arabs of the Ottoman Empire were then subjected to new colonization that was draped in a camouflage, and which prepared the way for decolonization by providing the peoples placed under the colonial régime with representative institutions, even though these did not have much power. Those limitations of foreign domination, however theoretical, applied to every region except Palestine, and the same was true for the possibilities and the prospects of a free future which they presented. The cause lay in the ambitions to settle there by a population (the Zionist Jews) which did not belong to the colonizing people and which was protected in that endeavour by most of the hegemonic Powers. The Zionist population managed slowly to extend its hold over Palestinian territory, to defend it when the protecting Power hesitated or refused, to set itself up as a State which subordinated the indigenous peoples or drove them into exile. The Zionists obtained for their new State legitimacy from the international organization in which the European and Europeanoid Powers predominated, and they extended it by intensive colonization of the territory and victorious wars. The decisive victory of the colonizing process was won in 1948, symbolically when the world-wide process of decolonization was entering a phase of acceleration, in which the ideological legitimization of colonization was almost totally abandoned and discredited.

However, new legitimization had been substituted for it, namely, the creation of a State through a partition of territory by a majority decision of the United Nations. That procedure was open to question because the decision had essentially been taken as a result of the preponderance of the developed nations and against the will of the indigenous population. Still, the new legitimacy seemed convincing to the majority of States and to the greater part of world public opinion, at least for a long period, although that conviction did not extend to the conquests or the conduct of the State thus created. Legitimization by alleged historic rights retains a good deal of influence, even in circles where one would scarcely expect it, although the legitimacy acquired from relatively long occupation and work on Palestinian soil carries the greatest weight in the eyes of world opinion. In this regard, there is a certain analogy between the forced exile of the majority of Palestinians from the State of Israel within its original boundaries and the disappearance or wiping out of the American Indians and the Australian aborigines.

In light of these circumstances, several questions may be raised for the future.

1. Will colonization, as in the United States and South America, result in permanent fait accompli that is almost universally legitimated and perhaps even recognized by the ethnic group in question?

2. Are we, on the contrary, moving towards the abolition of the State of Israel as a preponderantly Jewish State? A similar question arises in the case of South Africa.

3. Are we moving towards a middle-course solution which would be the way to peace in our time? This refers to the establishment of a new ethnic group, a new cultural formation with its political translation on Palestinian land, a State in a position to defend the aspirations and interests of the new ethnic group, and the acquiescence of the dispossessed ethnic group through compensation.

If the middle-course solution is not achieved, we shall be thrown back on one of the two extreme solutions. The second seems achievable only after a very severe and very long struggle involving new catastrophes along the lines of those which have been taking place successively for some 30 years. The first seems almost impossible to achieve in toto, because we live in an era when such alienation gives rise to rebellion and to acts of violence on the part of those who reject the fait accompli, even if they are few in number. The author prefers a middle-course solution that would be sparing of human lives and losses of all kinds. It is clear, however, that the future, like the past, will be determined by the relations of forces.

Notes

1/ Cf. Wilson's address to Congress on 8 January 1918 on the 14 points, e.g., in Speeches and Documents in American History, selected and edited by Robert Birley, vol. IV, 1914-1939 (London, Oxford University Press, 1942) (The World's Classics, 491), pp. 38-42 and p. 41.

2/ V. I. Lenin, "O prave natsii na samoopredelenie" (The right of nations to self-determination) (in Prosveshchemie, 1914, Nos. 4, 5 and 6, vol. XX, pp. 365-424, French translation Oeuvres, vol. XX (Paris, ed. sociales et Moscou, Ed. en langues étrangères, 1959), pp. 415-481, sec. 7 (on p. 401 of the Russian text, p. 445 of the French translation).

3/ Cf. Arno Joseph Mayer, Political Origins of the New Diplomacy, 1917-1918, (New York: Vintage Books, 1970).

4/ Address quoted, in Speeches and Documents ..., p. 39.

5/ Ibid., p. 39.

6/ Ibid., p. 41.

7/ Maurice Moch, Le mandat britannique en Palestine, (Paris, Ed. Albert Lechelinck, 1932), p. 13.

8/ It is necessary to read what Chaim Weizmann said on the reasons which prompted the initiative of this memorandum (the draft which is said to have been prepared by Herbert Samuel, for which he is reproached) and which resolved the Zionist leaders to approve it (Trial and Error, the Autobiography of Chaim Weizmann, illustrated edition (London, East and West Library, 1950) p. 360 et seq.). To the amazement of the anxious Weizmann, Vladimir Jabotinsky himself accepted, remarking that "the White Paper, if carried out honestly (sic) and conscientiously, would still afford us a framework for building up a Jewish majority in Palestine, and for the eventual emergence of a Jewish State". The text is conveniently published in The Israel-Arab Reader, a Documentary History of the Middle East Conflict, edited by Walter Laqueur, (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1969, revised edition 1970 (Pelican Books)), pp. 67-72.

9/ I refer readers to the information which I gave in my article "Israel, fait colonial?" (Les Temps Modernes, No. 253 bis (1967) pp. 17-88), p. 34, no. 28; English translation in book form, Israel, A Colonial-Settler State? (New York, Pathfinder Press, 1973) p. 105, No. 30. In general, I have given references to original documents for the main points. Works and documents published subsequently might, of course, also be quoted. However, none invalidates the conclusions which I have drawn.

10/ I refer readers to the discussions found passim in the collection of articles comprised in my book Peuple juif ou problème juif? (Paris, Maspero, 1981). A partial English translation is in preparation (London, Al Saqi Books). It will contain, inter alia, the article in which I focus on this question, "De la nation juive au problème juif", which appeared in the journal L'homme et la société, No. 9 (July-September 1968), pp. 141-183, and prefaced in the second edition of Abraham Léon's book La conception matérialiste de la question juive (Paris, Etudes et documentation internationales, 1968).

11/ Cf. my book La fascination de l'Islam (Paris, Maspero, 1980). There is an abridged English translation of the major part of the two articles which make up this collection: "Two Western Images and Western Studies of Islam", in The Legacy of Islam, 2nd ed., edited by Joseph Schacht with C. E. Bostworth (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1974), pp. 9-62.

12/ I have given an historic and explanatory table of the phases of the more or less marked manifestations of this specificity in my article "Qu'est-ce que les Palestiniens" in La Nouvelle Critique, No. 82 (63) (March 1975), pp. 55-67.
