

THE PALESTINE QUESTION AND TURKEY *

by

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Turkey has been interested in the Palestine question in the Ottoman and the Republican periods of its history. Ottoman involvement may be summarized as opposition to the Zionist schemes of Judaizing Palestine. Republican attitude oscillated between voting against the Partition in 1947 and recognition of the Zionist entity on the other. Since 1965, however, there is a marked tendency, at the official level, to improve relations with the Arab countries. There is enough evidence, on the other hand, to show people's support of the Palestinian cause.

It is well-known that the Ottoman Turkish presence in Palestine encompasses 402 years, beginning in 1516 and extending down to the end of the First World War. It will be remembered that the Jews who were being persecuted elsewhere found refuge in the Middle East under Turkish rule. They could settle anywhere they liked. These settlements, nevertheless, did not change the basic demographic ratio in Palestine. Even the figures of the 1914 census, included in the introductory chapter to the British *Census of Palestine* after the First World War, shows that the population of Palestine was 689,272 persons, of whom there were a maximum of 60,000 Jews.¹ The Ottoman Turkish Sultans paid special attention to Jerusalem, which remained the city of the three faiths. The present superstructure of the walls of the Holy City is the work of Sü-

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¹ Government of Palestine, *Census of Palestine: 1922*.

leyman the Magnificent. The maintenance and the embellishment of the two mosques in Jerusalem were a source of pride to the successive sultans.

Towards the end of the Nineteenth Century, the cooperation between Zionism and imperialism must have caught the attention of the Ottoman Government, which closed Palestine to Jewish immigration when England occupied Egypt in 1882. One must underline here, at the outset, that Zionism was not the product of the Jewish masses. It was developed by the Jewish bourgeoisie and supported by all agents of imperialism. Originally, Palestine was not even selected as the site for Zionist settlement: At the Sixth Zionist Congress, for instance, it was none other than Theodor Herzl, the founder of Zionism, who supported a proposal to set up a Jewish colony in East Africa.²

But rivalry between Britain and France, and later Germany, in the Middle East, which was then mostly within the Ottoman frontiers and the struggle for its partitioning compelled everyone of these colonial powers to look for new colonial acquisitions. Hence, the idea of settling Jews in Palestine appeared to provide an opportunity for colonisation, that, in their opinion, was likely not to provoke sharp military measures. They were well aware that the days of unrestrained colonisation were over.

Further, the intensity of class struggle at the beginning of the Twentieth Century forced imperialism to support all forces that opposed class solidarity of the working people. That is, the governments of all the major European states were objectively interested in Zionism. The revolutionary forces were rapidly gathering momentum in Central and Eastern Europe, where the majority of the European Jews lived. Russia's multinational proletariat was preparing a decisive battle. And, apart from the intellectuals, the Jewish working class was gravitating towards the Social-Democratic labour parties. The reactionary forces, in turn, were fanning national enmity and provoking clashes between the workers of various nationalities. It was at this point that the Palestine alternative seemed especially attractive. The *religion* factor would help to reduce Jewish participation in the revolutionary movement in Europe. The fact that Zionism was a counter-revolutionary, Jewish bourgeois ideology becomes more apparent in respect to Herzl's dealings with the anti-Semitic Russian Czarist ministers Witte and Plehve, responsible

² Herzl, *Polnoye Sobraniye Reçey i Statey o Silyonizme*, Belostok, 1905, st. 257.

for the pogroms in Kishinev. Herzl promised the Czarist Government to help divert the attention of the Jewish working class from revolutionary ideas.³

Likewise, the process of class differentiation having penetrated into the Jewish masses, the Jewish bourgeoisie saw in Zionism an opportunity to gain control of the Jewish working class. Zionism, then, arose as an attempt of the pro-imperialist Jewish middle class, to create internationally and in each country a reserve to serve Zionism's principal ally, that is, the chosen imperialist power at a given time. The World Zionist Organisation and the Jewish Colonial Trust were the expressions of this attempt. The "Jewish state" slogan was a means to attain other goals. The myth of the "antiquity" of Zionism is a cover to conceal its class content.

One may remember here that the founders of Zionism identified this creed with the cause of white settlerdom and that their idea of the proposed Jewish state served the requirements of private capital. Even prior to Herzl, the Zionist writer Moses Hess advocated the view of history that the race struggle was the principal one. He had reversed the socialist view that racism was a cover for class interests. It is more than symbolical that the original draft of Herzl's *The Jewish State* was entitled *An Address to the Rothschilds*. When Herzl said that he was endeavouring to form a wall of defence for Europe in Asia, he was actually promising the European upper bourgeoisie, a big new market. His insistence on the Jews constituting *Ein Volk* (One People) aimed to help conceal the Jewish bourgeois exploitation of the Jewish working class. He also provided argument for the anti-Semites who channelled part of the potential of class struggle to racial struggle.

It is apparent, then, that Zionist colonisation was presented to the leading imperialist countries of Europe as a foothold for their influence. It was appropriate, under the circumstances, that Abdülhamit II, Sultan of Turkey, issued in 1885 an edict against aliens holding or acquiring real estate in Palestine and against the creation there of any further Jewish colonies. And beginning with November 1900, foreign Jews were allowed to stay in Palestine for three months as pilgrims, and they were prevented from buying land. Ben Zvi (later Israeli President) and Ben Gurion (later Israeli Premier)

³ Juriy Ivanov, *Ostorojno: Siyonizm*, Moskva, Izdaletstvo Politiceskoy Literaturi, 1969, st. 68.

were both expelled from Palestine by the Turkish Government.⁴ Weizmann (also later Israeli President) wrote:

"We knew that the doors of Palestine were closed to us. We knew that every Jew who entered Palestine was given 'the red ticket', which he had to produce on demand and by virtue of which he could be expelled at once by the Turkish authorities. We knew that the Turkish law forbade the acquisition of land by Jews..."⁵

Such restrictions, however, at times, became inoperative.⁶ They were opposed by the diplomatic representatives of the countries which enjoyed capitulatory rights within the Ottoman Empire. The foreign states asserted that all their nationals, irrespective of religious affiliation, were entitled to the same privileges. It is of course ironical that such arguments should emanate from the representatives of countries notorious for their anti-Semitism and that likewise such arguments be addressed to the Turks who opened up their country to the Jews persecuted in Europe.

The Ottoman Government was, nevertheless, stubbornly opposed to the Zionist aspirations in Palestine. Herzl's letter⁷ of March 19, 1899, to M. Youssuf Zia Al-Khalidi may be read with interest today, in terms of the authors' complaints of the Ottoman Government as well as the Zionist promises made in it. Al-Khalidi, a Palestinian scholar and Mayor of Jerusalem (1899), was the member for Jerusalem in the Ottoman Parliament. Herzl states in the opening paragraph that the "Jews have been, are and will be the best friends of Turkey since the day when Sultan Selim opened his Empire to the persecuted Jews of Spain." Asserting that the Zionist idea has no hostile tendency towards the Ottoman Government, he reasons that this movement is concerned with opening up new resources for the Ottoman Empire and that in allowing immigration to a number of Jews bringing their intelligence, financial acumen and means of enterprise to the country, the well-being of the entire country would be the result. The following remarks of Herzl are even more

⁴ David Ben Gurion, "We Look Towards America", *Jewish Observer and Middle East Review*, January 31, 1964, pp. 14-16.

⁵ Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, New York, Harper, 1949, p. 41.

⁶ A.L. Tibawi, *Anglo-Arab Relations and the Question of Palestine: 1914-1921*, London, Luzac, 1977, p. 18.

⁷ For the text of the letter, see: Walid Khalidi, ed., *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem Until 1948*, Beirut, the Institute for Palestine Studies, 1971.

intriguing: He argues that the Jews have no belligerent power behind them. But all historical evidence indicates that the British, French and German imperialists were interested in assisting the forces prepared to carry out the mutually advantageous enterprise of colonising Palestine. Herzl added that they themselves were "a completely peaceful element". A host of United Nations General Assembly resolutions today challenge the truth of this statement. Herzl also stated categorically that they did not think of ever touching the Holy Places. Today, the Judaization of Jerusalem and the whole of Palestine negates this statement. He must have had his tongue in cheek when he wrote that they were not thinking of sending the non-Jewish population away. The letter ends with the unhappy note that Herzl had submitted to the Ottoman Sultan some general propositions, but that Turkey did not understand the enormous advantages which Zionism offered it.

Likewise, a letter⁸ addressed by a prominent Arab from Jerusalem to the Chief Rabbi of Paris and forwarded to Herzl in 1899 evaluated the Zionist claims as impracticable on account of Turkey, the attitude of the indigenous population and the question of the Holy Places. But Herzl kept on visualizing in his *Altneuland* a Jewish Palestine, in which the Palestinian Arabs would voice their love for their Jewish brethren to whom they would owe so much. In 1901, when this book was about to be finished, Herzl went to Istanbul to obtain a Charter for the privileges of a *Jüdisch-Ottomanische Land-Companie zur Besiedlung von Palästina und Syrien*. (Jewish-Ottoman Colonisation Association for the Settlement of Palestine and Syria). His successor tried to obtain a similar Charter from Turkey. Herzl's *Altneuland* may picture a prosperous Arab village harbouring love for the immigrant Jews, but the same Herzl's draft Charter contained a clause that gave the Jews the right to deport the native Palestinians. These Charters were not accepted by the Ottoman Government. Abdülhamit's opposition to Zionism has even led to the latter's support of the Young Turk Revolution that deposed the Turkish Sultan in 1908.⁹

Turkish opposition did not stop the rivalry among the great powers or their courting of Zionism. Still, how intense the compe-

⁸ Neville Mandel, "Turks, Arabs and Jewish Immigration to Palestine: 1882-1914," *St. Anthony's Paper's*, No. 17, *Middle Eastern Affairs*, No. 4, Albert Hourani, ed., London, Oxford U.P., 1965, pp. 89-90.

⁹ Mete Tunçay, "Jön Türkler, Farmasonlar ve Yahudiler Üstüne", *Birikim*, No. 45 (Kasım 1978), pp. 52-53 v.d.

tion was may be illustrated with the following example: Shortly before the First World War, Russia's tea magnate Vysotsky built a technical college for young Jews in Haifa. As soon as it was constructed, the question arose as to who would be predominant there, and what would be the language of instruction. There was a system of Jewish schools supported by the *Alliance Israélite Universelle* of Paris. The *Hilfsverein der Deutschen Juden* was the system that the Germans used for their own ends.¹⁰

But in the long run, the struggle was won by the pro-British Zionist group headed by Weizmann. A British military strategist wrote that a future Jewish state in Palestine "would be a source of great strength" to Britain in the Eastern Mediterranean, both politically and ultimately militarily.¹¹

Turkish opposition to Zionist schemes were unwavering until the very end. The U.S. Ambassador Morgenthau's Cincinnati speech in 1916 to the effect that the Ottoman Government might be induced, after the First World War, to sell Palestine to the Jews highly annoyed the Turks. They were also disturbed by press reports that Turkey would agree to Jewish predominance under German pressure. Cemâl Paşa, however, had turned down a suggestion made to him by the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs during his visit to Berlin in 1917. He even stated that there would be no new Jewish immigration to Palestine and that the Jews could settle anywhere on Ottoman territory but Palestine. He made clear that the Arabs, who formed the overwhelming majority of the indigenous population, were opposed to Zionism. Moreover, the Turks uncovered a Jewish spy-ring, under the direction of a wealthy Jewish family, which aided the British during the war. Actually, the Turks did not need this extra stimulus. Their attitude had been clear since the inception of Zionism.

It is well-known that, with the end of the First World War, the conquered Arab lands were put under the Mandate System, that the Palestine Arabs were not consulted in the selection of the Mandatory Power and that Britain, which became the governing authority, rapidly began to implement the program of the Judaization of Palestine. The developments between the two world wars (1919-1939) and even during the Second World War are not the topics

¹⁰ Ivanov, op. cit., st. 58.

¹¹ Herbert Sidebotham, *England and Palestine*, London, Constable, 1918, p. 186.

of this paper. One may recall here that in 1947, Britain requested the United Nations to place the question of Palestine on the agenda of the General Assembly. The part played by the United States in bringing about a majority vote in favour of partitioning Palestine is also well-known.

The people of Turkey take pride, however, that their government, in the 1945-1947 period, supported the Arab countries during the discussions in the United Nations on Palestine. Turkey upheld all Arab proposals to give independence to the indigenous people of this land. Finally, Turkey has voted against the Partition Resolution.¹² It is important to indicate that Turkey stood by her own decision to oppose the partitioning of Palestine. It is common knowledge that some governments were forced to change their vote. Carlos P. Romulo, for instance, explains in his Memoirs¹³ the pressure brought on the President of the Philippines who changed his position. Six countries which had indicated their intention of voting against partition became targets. They were China, Ethiopia, Greece, Haiti, Liberia and the Philippines. All except Greece failed to withstand to pressure. Turkey's stand, on the other hand, had been clear and unwavering.

Turkish attitude changed, however, as the ruling circles of that country sought political and eventually military collaboration with the North Atlantic group of countries, led by the United States. Some Turks considered such association with the "West" synonymous with progress and civilisation. Very few of those who identified the interests of the country stopped to analyze the economic and social structure of the Western societies. Very many indeed adored an outer radiance of a group of states which held the torch of enlightenment during a particular stage of historical development. The Western world, however, was something vastly different then this outer radiance. A correct evaluation of the West depends, like many other things in the Universe, on the acceptance of contradictions in it. Such omission, otherwise, puts us in no better position than the blind men who attempt to define an elephant, each touching its trunk, leg or tail. The definition of anything, as a matter of fact,

¹² U.N., *The Yearbook of the United Nations, 1947-1948*, New York, 1950, p. 247; For a Turkish source on Turkey's policy towards the Arab Middle East: Omer Kürkçüoğlu, *Türkiye'nin Arap Orta Doğusu'na Karşı Politikası: 1945-1970*, Ankara, Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi, 1972.

¹³ Carlos P. Romulo, *I Walked With Heroes*, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961, pp. 285-289.

rests not only on its composing factors, but also on elements which exert an influence changing its characteristics, personality or identity. Just like a tree has the capacity to turn into coal and earth as well as being composed of stem and leaves, the Western society too gathers in itself contradictions in terms of origin as well as present identity. What ought to concern us is the kind of relationship that may or will be established between a Western world possessing certain economic, political and ideological features and a developing country like Turkey. In the West, one sees inquisition and fascism as well as rationalism and socialism. Such a conglomeration is doubtless a composite of contradictions. The "West" is a community of states, situated generally along the North Atlantic coast, which has destroyed feudalism in the age of bourgeois democratic revolution and entered the path of capitalist development in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries. To have entered this path some two-hundred years ago means that the West has been successful in realizing progressive steps required at those historical moments. The societies that accomplished this forward move certainly attained economic and political superiority over the rest of the world. This superiority manifested itself first as colonialism and later as imperialism. Certainly, the West has been able to create an island of ease and comfort on account of domestic and foreign exploitation. The further concentration of capital in the West is indebted to the poor "East". Just to call oneself a "Western" country by name does not entangle one from impoverishment.

This analysis is not a denial of Western contribution to humanism. Progressive and democratic ideas have emerged in the West in the Age of Imperialism as well. The Western socialists, for instance, who gave the theory and the practice of the working class struggle, must have affected the Western society in one way or another. But that progressive ideas were also mentioned in the West cannot be generalized. The genuine representatives of the West are those who wrote the first draft of Truman's or Marshall's speeches. But after the Second World War, the West was no longer the citadel of world civilisation. History teaches us that civilisation is never under the monopoly of a single nation. There were times when the West contributed progressively to humanism. However, even then one has to be careful over the West's usurpation of humanistic values. In the last few centuries during which the Oriental peoples have experienced a halt or even a retreat, the Westerners have boldly asserted that all the values that may be termed as hu-

manistic contributions originated from the West. The Western pretension to pose as the creator of universal culture is too obvious.

When Turkey wanted to join the group of "Western" states, she was herself an "Eastern" country, in terms of much of her history, social structure and the aspirations of her people. But Turkey's rulers were prepared to make sacrifices for admission to Western alliances. As a consequence of this general orientation, Turkey recognized, in early 1949, the newly-created state of Israel. She was the first Moslem country to do so. What is more, she endeavoured to lead the other Middle Eastern countries into the Western system of entangling alliances. Apart from herself losing the sympathy of the Arab nation, Turkey, by voluntary leadership for projects such as the Middle East Defence Organization or the Baghdad Pact, seemed easing the burden of the Western nations bent on exploiting the resources of the area.

As far as the sheer value of the territory was concerned, General Dwight D. Eisenhower had described it as the most strategically important area in the world.¹³ This evaluation conformed with the post-war American geopolitical theories of world domination. The Middle East was in the "rimland" of the American strategist Nicholas Spykman.¹⁴ The Middle East Defence Organisation, proposed on October 13, 1951, by Turkey and her Western friends, was certainly ill-conceived. So was the Baghdad Pact, later known as the (now defunct) CENTO. As a local Middle Eastern power, Turkey took the lead in bolstering unpopular governments to facilitate Western influence in the area. Turkey, along with the leading Western countries, was being identified with a particular social and political clique on its way out.

And the domestic and foreign policies of the state of Israel, that Turkey had recognized in such haste, was revealing an alliance with the major imperialist powers, especially the United States. A U.S. House of Representatives document¹⁵ well defines the strategic importance of Israel for the Western powers. Given the circumstances of Israel's creation, her state structure and her close links with imperialist circles, Israel was assigned a role against the li-

¹⁴ Nicholas Spykman, *American Strategy and World Politics*, New York, Harcourt, 1942.

¹⁵ *The Mutual Security Program: Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, Eighty-Second Congress, First Session (June 26 - July 31, 1951)*, Washington, 1951, pp. 644-647.

beration movements and the progressive forces. Israel is a state where power rests in the hands of the rich bourgeoisie and where the ideology of Zionism dominates all walks of life. The state apparatus and most of the political parties are under Zionist influence. The official view is that Israel is a homogeneous Jewish state, with no antagonism among the individuals nor class conflicts in its society. But the interests of the ruling government circles have always been closely linked with those of local and foreign capital. The Israeli society is developing greater polarization. The system of political parties reflects this social and economic polarization. The Histadrut, or the General Federation of Labour, shares the world outlook of the Zionist political parties. It has cooperated in the 1956 and the 1967 aggressions. From the amount of propaganda disseminating from Israel and some Western sources, one might be led to believe that the rural areas of Israel were covered by *kibbutzim*.¹⁶ The truth, however, is that the number of people in the *kibbutzim* has always been a very small fraction (some six percent) of the Jewish population (non-Jews cannot be members) and that this fraction is steadily declining, now only three percent.

In the eyes of the Arabs, and especially the Palestinians, Turkey was cooperating with the Zionist entity as described above. It is unfortunate to say the least that Turkey behaved in a way at the two London conferences that followed the 1956 Suez crisis as if she was not a Middle Eastern country herself, but a small Western power. This was a total alienation to one's own environment and, in fact, to one's own self. But she was forced to withdraw her Ambassador in the Israeli capital, towards the end of the same year, unable to resist the pressure from various quarters.

It was the Justice Party Government of the middle 1960's that showed some understanding of the Arab views. Turkey lost no time in joining the other nations when the 1967 Israeli aggression was almost universally condemned. She was one of the supporters calling for an extraordinary session of the U.N. General Assembly. She even sent aid, through the Turkish Red Crescent, to those Arab countries affected by the war. She joined others in opposing the alteration of the status of Jerusalem. She displayed protest after the fire that partly destroyed the Al-Aqsa Mosque. But her Foreign Minister put a reservation to the decision of the Islamic Conference

¹⁶ Raul Teitelbaum, *The Kibbutz in Contemporary Israeli Society*, Tel Aviv, 1954; E. Kanovsky, *The Economy of the Israeli Kibbutz*, Cambridge, Mass., 1966.

in Rabat, held in reaction to the burning of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, to the effect that his country would be bound by the Rabat resolutions as much as they do not contradict the U.N. decisions. Turkey was demonstrating an effort, though limited, in trying to understand Arab views. It should be noted with satisfaction that she did not allow the U.S. Sixth Fleet to utilize her harbours during the crisis in Jordan in 1970. This was some progress when one remembers that the U.S. had been able to make use of the İncirlik air base (in southern Turkey) at the time of the 1958 Lebanese crisis.

The *sine qua non* of appropriate improvement in Turkish-Arab relations is a much better understanding of the common denominator of Arab, principally Palestinian aspirations. This author had written some years ago that the struggle of the Palestinians against imperialism and Zionism is "useful and democratic in the interest of all the peoples of the world" and that support of the Palestinian cause meant also "strengthening our own position".¹⁷

The minimum condition for the recognition of the Palestinians is their right to open up an office in Turkey. Promises to this effect were made by the present and the previous governments. Although the present government has been in office for nearly a year-and-a-half, its Foreign Minister has been making unfortunate statements* in the Arab countries in favour of continued relations with the Zionist entity while the Palestinians await the official permission to start their representation on Turkish soil. The opening of such an office in our country will connote the Turkish recognition of the Palestinian identity and the affirmation of the Palestinian people's unity.

The Palestinians do not constitute only a refugee problem. And the conflict is not one between Israel and the Arabs over frontiers. The Palestinians are a people, a nation. They have shown national consciousness in reaction to Jewish immigration much earlier than generally known. The most prominent symbol of this early current was the writer Najib Nassar, who made his paper *Al Carmel* (1909) an instrument opposing Zionist settlement. After the 1948 catastrophe, the Palestine people had had to counter a programmed attempt to eliminate its national existence. "Al Fateh" was the organisation that went ahead of all the others in presenting Palestinian thought

¹⁷ Türkkiye Ataöv, "Devrimci Filistin Halkına Selâm," *Devrim*, Ankara, October 13, 1970.

* The Foreign Ministry later denied that such statements were ever made.

and concept, based on Palestinian resources. It brought out *Our Palestine* in Beirut. The triumph of the Algerian Revolution in 1962 showed that a people holding to its own cause could achieve its national aspirations. The conference on Palestine was held on May 28, 1964 in Jerusalem. In its first session, the formation of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (P.L.O.) was announced. The League of Arab States sent an official invitation to the P.L.O. to attend the meeting to be held in Damascus in June 1964. The announcement of Arab recognition of the P.L.O. was made in the second Arab summit conference, held in Alexandria on September 5-11, 1964. The signs of international recognition appeared in the Conference of the Non-Aligned States in Cairo on October 5, 1964. The World Peace Council was the first international organisation that recognized the P.L.O. on February 15, 1966. The People's Republic of China was the first foreign state to recognize the P.L.O. in 1965. And the Karamah Battle, on March 21, 1968, was the first prominent sign showing the possibility of success of armed rebellion.

The resistance movement is of course the expression of the existence of a people. But armed rebellion is not everything. The Palestinians have also created their state apparatus. There is a nucleus Palestinian economy. "The Production Society of the Sons of the Palestinian Martyrs" (SAMED) was created in 1969 to provide work for the families of the Palestinian martyrs. But the following years saw a steady expansion of SAMED's production activities. The *Ashbal* (Lion Cubs) and the *Zahrat* (Flowers) are the educational institutions for the youth. There is the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, with hospitals, curative medicine, school of nursing and professional centers. There is the Tal-al-Zaatar Foundation (or "The Childrens' House of Steadfastness"), G.U.P.W. (the General Union of Palestinian Workers), G.U.P.T. (teachers), G.U.P.D.P. (doctors and pharmacists), G.U.P.E. (engineers), G.U.P.S. (students), militant Palestinian art, Palestinian films, the Palestinian Society of the Blind and the like. We have before us, then, a people and a state apparatus, which of course includes a fighting force. It is this fact that led to the U.N. General Assembly vote on November 22, 1974, which granted the P.L.O. an observer's status. It is this Palestinian entity that Turkey ought to recognise without any further delay.

In addition to expectations from the official Turkish circles, the opinion forming bodies, organs or individuals are counted upon to enlighten the public objectively and in an unadulterated form. There are indeed very few published academic research work in Turkish

revealing the truth behind the Palestine question. In comparison to what is being done in countries like Norway or Finland, geographically quite far away from the Middle East, Turkish material is few in numbers and some are incurable pro-Zionist. Many topics await academic treatment by a wide range of researchers and authors.

What is expected is, of course, a matter of good-will and of learning. Only detailed expert study of all the issues involved will show the student of Arab affairs that the Palestine question is not one merely between *two* points of view (namely, Palestinian and Zionist), but a case of *right* and *wrong*. The scholars and writers who volunteer to form public opinion in Turkey should know, in due respect to their readers and the average citizen, the correct answers to a host of questions, that constitute the Palestine problem. To name just a few: Was Palestine "a land without a people" when the waves of Zionist immigration poured into it? If some Turkish writers have not been able to follow the background of the demographic reality in the history of Palestine, if they cannot reply whether the Zionist movement was able to purchase land in Palestine from its inhabitants, if they fail to answer whether the Balfour Declaration is a legal document granting the Zionists a right in Palestine and if they have not familiarized themselves with many other facts, figures and intricacies of the problem, they can hardly shoulder the responsibility of briefing correctly their readers or listeners. Further, what was the attitude of the Zionist leaders towards the Palestinian Arabs? It is very instructive to read the evaluations of the well-known Israeli writer Amos Elon. How did the anti-Zionist Jews react to this attitude? Was the Zionist colonization realized peacefully? Did those Zionists immigrating to Palestine come as labourers and farmers, or were they in fact conquerors? Were Zionist military preparations in Palestine a "necessary measure" dictated by Arab attacks against Jewish settlements? Did the Zionist movement while seeking to create the Jewish state try to avoid committing an injustice against the Arabs? In what respects, were the Zionist colonies racist?

Is it true that the Zionists transformed Palestine from a semi-desert into a developing vital and successful economy? At this point I cannot help but remember the remark of an educated Turk (who had just returned from occupied Palestine as a guest of the Israeli Government) that he was shown the blooming desert. Physically, Palestine consists of four main sub-regions: the coastal plain, the plateau region, the Jordan valley and the southern desert. Even

in the Biblical times, this country was referred to as "the land of milk and honey". George Sandys, an American poet who was one of the first travellers to Palestine, in 1610, described it as a "country that overflows with milk and honey in the midst of a habitable area...(with) fresh water springs...soil (being) of finest nature ...most fertile...with various fruits...rich with olive trees, vineyards..."¹⁸ Henry Maundrell, the Anglican priest affiliated to the British Levant Company in Aleppo, visited Palestine in 1697. He describes it as "spacious and fertile plain...cultivated land where wheat, vineyards and olive trees grew."¹⁹ Richard Pocock, another Englishman in the Eighteenth Century, writes of "fertile soil, producing excellent plants..."²⁰ The Irish traveller Buck Willy wrote in similar vein.²¹ In the Nineteenth Century, there were more travellers. Dr. Maryon spoke of the "luxuriance of vegetation."²² In 1856, Reverend Arthur Stanley wrote that Palestine was "decidedly a fertile country".²³ I highly recommend the book by the American missionary William Thompson, who had visited, between 1832 and 1876, all the places cited in the Bible.²⁴ Mark Twain, who was also in Palestine in 1867, found it "eminently green".²⁵ Claude Conder, in an article entitled "The Fertility of Ancient Palestine", published in the *Seasonal Report* (June-July 1876) written for the Committee of the Exploration of Palestine, discussed the characteristics of this land in ancient times and noted no basic changes since the Biblical accounts. One should be satisfied with this cited material as well as many other published works that cannot be mentioned here on account of time and space limitations, to negate the superficial impression that the Zionists are turning a desert into a garden.

There are indeed many other questions to which the Turkish writers and speakers ought to give correct answers: When did the Palestinians become aware of the dangers of Zionist colonization? Did the Palestinians ever agree to the establishment of the Jewish

¹⁸ George Sandys, *A Relation of a Journey Begun A.D. 1610*, 2nd ed., London, 1621, pp. 141, 151, 177.

¹⁹ Henry Maundrell, *Journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem, Beirut, Khayyat*, 1963 p. 70.

²⁰ Richard Pocock, *A Description of the East and Other Countries*, 2nd ed., London, 1740, p. 64.

²¹ T. Willy, *The Memoirs of Buck Willy*, London, A. Morning Ltd., 1960.

²² *The Travels of Lady Hester Stanhope*, narrated by her physician Dr. Maryon, London, Colburn, 1846, p. 319.

²³ Arthur Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, London, Hazel and Watson, 1910, p. 98.

²⁴ William Thompson, *The Land of the Book*, New York, Harper, 1882.

²⁵ Mark Twain, *Innocents Abroad*, Signet, p. 345.

national home in Palestine? Have they ever agreed to unlimited Jewish immigration? Were the Zionist terrorist operations before the establishment of the state mounted only by dissident terrorist organizations?

Let us dwell very briefly on the answer to the last question. It is now on Zionist records that the Haganah headquarters had decided, in March 1948, to achieve "a military decision by going over to the offensive."²⁶ On April 1, the Haganah started the first of their thirteen military campaigns that made up "Plan D". The notorious Deir Yassin massacre came eight days later (on April 9, 1948). 254 peaceful Palestinians were murdered in cold blood. This is not the only example of Zionist terrorism. The other operations, within a matter of a few days were: Nachshon, Harel, Misparayim, Mateteh, Maccabi, Gideon, Barak, Ben Ami, Schfilon, Quazaze, Sa'sa, Haifa, Salameh, Biyar Adas, Qana, Qastal, Lajjun, Saris, Tiberias, Jerusalem, Jaffa, Acre, Safad, Beisan...These events were never (or very poorly) reported in the Turkish press. But any Palestinian reaction is presented on the first page, often with the implication of terrorism. Let us remember that the state of Israel was founded on terror. And it was none other than Ben Gurion who confirmed the fact that the Zionists switched to attack as April (1948) began.²⁷ Menachem Begin admits in his Memoirs that it was they who passed to the offensive.²⁸ Begin is now the Israeli Premier, and the State of Israel officially recognizes (in the Fallen Soldiers' Families Law, Part I, No. 1) that the members of the terrorist gangs were engaged in its "legal" military service. But these activities were not undertaken in self-defence, and they were directed against civilians.

Israel is the only U.N. member which has not submitted to that international organisation a map showing its frontiers. The Turks have to dwell in length on the meaning of such behaviour. Israel is founded on land usurped from its rightful owners. Only force of arms determines the Israeli borders. Israel has ambitions in Lebanon as well. The friends of Zionism ought to ask to themselves what really is the content of Israeli peace. They should be reminded that one cannot be a supporter of the Camp David Accords and the ensuing

²⁶ Netanel Lorch, *Israel's War of Independence: 1947-1949*, Hartford, Hartmore, 1968, p. 84.

²⁷ David Ben Gurion, *Rebirth and Destiny of Israel*, New York, Philosophical Library, 1954, p. 106.

²⁸ Menachem Begin, *The Revolt: the Story of the Irgun*, New York, 1951, p. 165.

Egyptian-Israeli Agreement and at the same time a friend of the Arab nation. Israel is a country which came into being by making another one cease to be. And the Egyptian-Israeli Agreement does not only defer the just and the permanent solution of the Palestine problem, it also forms the basis for a new imperialist strategy in this region. The Camp David Framework is essentially the Begin plan of December 28, 1977. It is designed to serve the interests of Israel. The Agreement, between Begin, Carter and Sadat, gives a small minority of the Palestinian people a fraction of their rights on a bit of their own territory. Even this promise is conditional on a long, step-by-step process, during which Israel, as the occupying power, will have decisive vetos. Anyone with any notion of law and right should realize that it excludes the Palestinians from participating in fundamental decisions about their own destiny.²⁹

The United States, it appears, has assigned to the Sadat regime and Israel new roles of policing the region in the interests of the United States. The Sadat régime's role in the Arabian Peninsula is illustrated by an oral agreement reached between Sultan Qabus of Oman and the Egyptian Vice-President, whereby Egyptian troops are replacing those sent by the former Shah of Iran to defend Qabus' throne. This Egyptian military presence in Oman is part of plan worked out by the U.S. Department of Defence, which seeks to ensure continued U.S. control of the Gulf oil reservoir and the protection of the pro-U.S. régimes in the region.³⁰

Great responsibility falls on the Turkish means of mass communications. But not all those who publish shoulder this responsibility. One may give a recent example out of many: A reporter of an influential Turkish daily, who had a private audience with the Israeli President, wrote from occupied Jerusalem that Mr. Isaac Navon "was originally from Turkey", and that "Syria, Iraq, the P.L.O. and the U.S.S.R. were preventing the peace efforts to encompass the whole area."³¹ The Israeli President apparently told the reporter that, a few hundred years ago, his ancestors had come to Turkey and again a few hundred years ago finally to Jerusalem and

²⁹ Türkkiye Ataöv, "Egyptian-Zionist Agreement is No Solution," *Baghdad Observer*, April 17, 1979.

³⁰ Türkkiye Ataöv, "Bölgemizdeki Yeni Amerikan Tuzakları," *Dünya*, 4 Haziran 1979.

³¹ *Milliyet*, March 21, 1979. For years, a three-article series remained the only published material in the same daily giving a chance of expression to the Arab views: Candan Ataöv, "Golan Cephesi", *Milliyet*, March 1, 9-10, 1974.

that he had never been to Turkey. This hardly makes him "Turkish", but perhaps serves the purpose of making the new Egyptian-Israeli Agreement less objectionable.

One expects, however, the Turkish means of mass communications to dwell objectively on several aspects of this problem. One also expects the Turkish legalists to uphold human rights in the Israeli-occupied territories. One anticipates that our educators will soon analyze in detail the kind of education given to Israeli pupils. Turkey was the only Middle Eastern country that did not participate in the international art exhibition for Palestine. And of course, the U.N. General Assembly has passed Resolution No. 3379 (XXX) of November 10, 1975, determining Zionism as a "form of racism and racial discrimination" for some good reasons. In connection with this U.N. resolution, this author has published several articles.³² I have then received an envelope from the Israeli Legation in Ankara, with a single enclosure, namely, the talk of the Israeli representative in the U.N., describing anti-Zionism as anti-Semitism. Nothing is dishonest than the slogan, unleashed by Israel and the United States, as the principal weapon in their campaign against the decision of the U.N., that anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism. This dishonest slogan is predicated on the false equation of Judaism with Zionism, and the equally false equation of Jews with Zionists.³³ In the last century and today, the greatest critics of Zionism have been and are the Jewish intellectuals and the majority of world Jewry.

When I had met Yasser Arafat and Abu Jihad, some months ago, in Southern Lebanon, the latter had told me that there was practically no support of their just cause from Turkey. But the former, when asked to evaluate the Turkish support, stated that he was sure of the Turkish people's sympathy for the Palestinians. The two statements are the two sides of the same coin. The outward contradiction will be eliminated once the gap between the official attitude and the tendencies of the people is bridged.

³² Some are: Türkkaya Ataöv, "Verdict on Zionism," *Daily News*, Ankara, November 25, 1975; ———, "Siyonizm Irkçılığın Bir Çeşididir," *Politika*, August 13, 1976.

³³ For a Jewish criticism of Zionism, see this author's consecutive articles in the daily *Vatan*, August 27-31 and September 2, 1976.