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## Zionism, anti-Semitism and colonialism

**Zionist leaders consciously recognised that state anti-Semitism was essential to their colonial project, writes Massad.**

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Ever since the inception of the Zionist movement, Zionist thinkers presented their national colonial project as a response to anti-Semitism. Whereas Zionists saw anti-Semitism as a symptom, if not a diagnosis, of the Jewish Question, they offered Zionism as the final cure that would eradicate anti-Semitism in Europe once and for all.

Herzl and his followers insisted that it is the presence of Jews in gentile societies that caused anti-Semitism. Herzl put it thus in his foundational Zionist pamphlet *Der Judenstaat*: "The unfortunate Jews are now carrying the seeds of anti-Semitism into England; they have already introduced it into America."

Sharing this diagnosis with anti-Semites, the Zionists called for the exit of Jews from gentile societies in order to "normalise" their "abnormal" situation, transforming them into a nation like other nations.

Zionism could only be realised through a colonial-settler project, which its founders understood was achievable only through an alliance with colonial powers. Whereas the colonisation of Palestine would start late, on the eve of the eclipse of European colonialism, Zionism would thrive in its early years precisely because both anti-Semitism and colonialism were *de rigueur* in late 19th and early 20th century Europe.

In its early years, Jewish Zionism along with its European Christian sponsors would invoke the

millenarian Protestant affirmation that European Jews were linked historically and geographically to Palestine to which they should "return". Palestinian opposition to Jewish colonisation would be cast as native fanatical resistance to European rule, as well as an affront to Jewish and Christian claims of Palestine as a "national home" for European Jews.

### **State-sponsored anti-Semitism**

State-sponsored anti-Semitism would prove most helpful to Zionism. Indeed, Zionist leaders consciously recognised that state anti-Semitism was essential to their colonial project. Herzl did not mince words about this. He would declare in his foundational pamphlet that "the Governments of all countries scourged by Anti-Semitism will be keenly interested in assisting us to obtain [the] sovereignty we want"; and indeed that not "only poor Jews" would contribute to an immigration fund for European Jews, "but also Christians who wanted to get rid of them".

Herzl would conclude in his *Diaries* that "the anti-Semites will become our most dependable friends, the anti-Semitic countries our allies". These were not slips or errors but indeed a long-term strategy that Zionism and Israel continue to deploy to this very day.

That Arthur Balfour was a well-known Protestant anti-Semite who in 1905 sponsored a bill (The Aliens Act) to prevent East European Jews fleeing pogroms from immigrating to England was not incidental to the fact that the Zionists rushed to court him, let alone to his own support of the Zionist project through the "Balfour Declaration", which would reroute Jews away from England.

When the Nazis took over power in Germany, the Zionists, sharing Herzl's understanding that anti-Semitism is the ally of Zionism, were the only Jewish group who would collaborate with them. In fact, contra all other German Jews (and everyone else inside and outside Germany) who recognised Nazism as the Jews' bitterest enemy, Zionism saw an opportunity to strengthen its colonisation of Palestine.

In 1933, Labour Zionism signed the Transfer "Ha'avara" Agreement with the Nazis, breaking the international boycott against the regime: Nazi Germany would compensate German Jews who emigrate to Palestine for their lost property by exporting German goods to the Zionists in the country thus breaking the boycott. Between 1933 and 1939, 60 percent of all capital invested in Jewish Palestine came from German Jewish money through the Transfer Agreement. Thus, Nazism was a boon to Zionism throughout the 1930s.

In 1935, the German Zionist branch was the only political force that supported the Nazi Nuremberg Laws in the country, and was the only party still allowed to publish its own newspaper the *Runschau* until after Kristallnacht in 1938. Nazi officials would visit Palestine as guests of the Zionists in 1934 and in 1937. In the latter year, it was none other than Adolf Eichmann and Herbert Hagen who arrived in the country. The two were taken by the Zionist envoy Feivel Polkes to Mount Carmel to visit a Jewish colonial-settlement.

Eichmann's second arrival in the country in the early 60s to be tried and executed was indeed his second visit, something Israeli propaganda always forgets to mention. Yet Zionism would always

claim that its collaboration with anti-Semitism was strategic, namely to save Jews.

This however does not square with the facts that during Nazi rule, Jews from Britain and the United States were given priority by the Zionists over German Jews for immigration to Palestine. Indeed, two-thirds of German Jewish applicants to immigrate to Palestine were turned down by the Zionists, whose criteria for the ideal immigrant was a Jew's commitment to Zionism, youth, good health, training, wealth, needed skills and knowledge of Hebrew.

## **The world after World War II**

As state-sponsored anti-Semitism disappeared with the defeat of the Nazis and the horrors of the Nazi holocaust became known, Zionists sought to conceal much of their history of collaboration with anti-Semitic movements and regimes. Yet the disappearance of state anti-Semitism created a dilemma for the Zionist project.

If Zionism considers itself a response to anti-Semitic threats against Jews, with the end of state anti-Semitism Zionism's *raison d'être* would be in jeopardy, as Jews would not be convinced of the need to move to the new state of Israel. Moreover, as anti-Semitism came to be rejected by the post-World War II world, so was colonialism. As the colonial age was ending and a post-colonial world of independent states was emerging, colonialism like anti-Semitism was thoroughly delegitimised in international relations and in European parlance.

This transformation placed Zionism in a quandary. Zionism could only proceed with more colonisation of Palestinian land, yet, recognising the increasing hostility to colonialism, it began to present its colonial project as anti-colonial struggle. As its British sponsors had to retreat and limit their support for the Zionist project since the beginning of World War II, right-wing Zionists turned against them.

Launching terrorist attacks against the British forces, the Jewish colonists were adamant that Britain had betrayed them. In the period between 1944 and 1948 Jewish terrorism and the British response to it led to the killing of 44 Jewish terrorists and 170 British soldiers and civilians, a ratio of 4 to 1 in favour of the terrorists. Unlike other anti-colonial struggles where the casualty figures would be astronomically in favour of the colonisers, Zionism would begin to call its terrorist war against Britain a "war of independence", casting itself as anti-colonial movement.

Now that Zionists began to recode their colonial project as "anti-colonial" while proceeding with colonisation, they understood that they could capitalise on the recent hostility to anti-Semitism in European public opinion. As the Palestinian people mounted their resistance to Jewish colonisation year after year, and decade after decade, Zionism began to fight them by labelling them anti-Semites.

Indeed, it was then that any call for the end of Zionist colonisation would be confronted with the argument of anti-Semitism. Israel decided then that if state anti-Semitism did not exist, it must be conjured up, if attacks on Jews qua Jews did not exist, they must be engineered, if an anti-Semitic attitude could be discerned, it must be capitalised on, generalised and exaggerated. For the only defence Israel could mount in the new world that was opposed to both colonialism and

anti-Semitism was to use one in defence of the other.

Zionism would begin to rewrite the Palestinian struggle against Jewish colonisation not as an anti-colonial struggle but as an anti-Semitic project. The story of the Palestinian Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini would become Exhibit A in the Zionist version of Palestinian history.

Despairing from convincing Britain to stop its support of the Zionist colonial project and horrified by the Zionist-Nazi collaboration that strengthened the Zionist theft of Palestine further, the Palestinian elitist and conservative leader Haj Amin al-Husseini (who opposed the Palestinian peasant revolt of 1936 against Zionist colonization) sought relations with the Nazis to convince them to halt their support for Jewish immigration to Palestine, which they had promoted through the Transfer Agreement with the Zionists in 1933.

It was the very same Zionist collaborators with the Nazis who would later vilify al-Husseini, beginning in the 1950s to the present, as a Hitlerite of genocidal proportions, even though his limited role ended up being one of propagandising on behalf of the Nazis to East European and Soviet Muslims on the radio.

Nonetheless, whenever the question of Jewish colonisation was raised by the Palestinians, the Zionist response would be to insist invariably that Jewish colonisation was the only way to end anti-Semitism and protect Jews, and that any and all opposition to Jewish colonisation of Palestine was nothing short of a continuation of anti-Semitism. Israel began to insist that any talk of colonisation of Palestinian land was nothing short of a distraction from anti-Semitism targeting Jews.

In light of the new post-war period that saw the end of state-sponsored anti-Semitism, the Zionists set out to attack Jews in a number of countries and to conjure up the spectre of anti-Semitism in countries that opposed Zionism. In Iraq, the Israeli Mossad planted bombs in synagogues, libraries and cafes in the early 1950s, which killed and injured Iraqi Jews and spread panic amongst them that Iraqi Muslims and Christians were targeting them. Collaboration ensued between Israel and the British-sponsored Iraqi regime to bring about the exodus of Iraqi Jews to Israel.

When Egyptian Jews still refused to go to Israel, the Mossad again placed bombs in Egyptian cinemas, train stations and post offices. When the Egyptian authorities uncovered the terrorist operation, later made famous under the name the "Lavon Affair", and its Jewish perpetrators were captured and tried, Israel launched a major propaganda campaign claiming that Nasser was "Hitler on the Nile".

In the post-Stalin Soviet Union, which unlike its Stalinist predecessor, opposed Zionism, and where all Soviet citizens were not allowed to emigrate, a major Cold War Israeli and US propaganda campaign insisted that the Soviets were anti-Semites. The Americans and the Israelis arranged to grant Soviet Jews special privileges over other Soviet citizens by forcing the Soviet government to grant them emigration visas.

Those Soviet Jews who left did so for economic reasons and as such went (to Israel's chagrin) to

the United States, a situation that forced Israel later to collaborate with the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu to reroute them to Israel forcibly. Indeed, the Israelis would later try to introduce legislation in the US to prevent their emigration to the United States, which indeed would close off its borders to them after the USSR fell. This would force many Soviet Jews (a majority of whom turned out to be Soviet non-Jews who pretended to be Jewish) to go to Israel as economic refugees in the 1990s.

## The post-Soviet world

Israel and Zionism have been in deep mourning over the passing of actual anti-Semitic regimes and of regimes that they could cast in that role, as these regimes had provided them with so much propaganda power to justify their colonial project. After the fall of the USSR, the Zionists ran out of arguments and of regimes they could label "anti-Semitic". In this new situation, Israeli propaganda would become outright hysterical. Attempting to cast some of the anti-Zionist pronouncements of the Iranian President Ahmadinejad as genocidal anti-Semitism, Israel is hoping it could cover up its ongoing colonisation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

In case this did not work, the Israeli embassy in Dublin last week summoned the supernatural powers of Jesus Christ to help cover up Zionist colonialism. In a **Christmas Message** to the Irish people on its official Facebook page, the embassy announced that the Palestinians would probably "lynch" Jesus and his mother Mary in Bethlehem today had they been alive as "Jews without security", hence the need for Israel to continue to colonise Palestinian land while ensuring the security of its Jewish colonial settlers.

Indeed Binyamin Netanyahu argued in his **UN speech** last year that Palestinian resistance to Jewish colonial settlement in the West Bank and East Jerusalem is itself anti-Semitic. He even compared Palestinian Authority laws criminalising collaboration with Jewish colonisation as akin to the Nuremberg Laws: "There are laws today in Ramallah that make the selling of land to Jews punishable by death. That's racism. And you know which laws this evokes." Netanyahu seems to have forgotten that it was the Zionists, not the Palestinians, who abetted the Nazis in 1935 when they supported the Nuremberg Laws.

Palestinians understood well these arguments and always insisted and insist that their struggle is against Jewish colonisation of their lands and not against Jews qua Jews. When Khaled Meshal arrived in Gaza a couple of weeks ago and made a speech to that effect, he insisted: "We do not *fight* the Jews because they are Jews. We *fight* the Zionist occupiers and aggressors. And we will *fight* anyone who tries to occupy our lands or attacks us."

The **British Observer** mistranslated his speech as: "We don't *kill* Jews because they are Jews. We *kill* the Zionists because they are conquerors and we will continue to *kill* anyone who takes our land and our holy places." While the *Observer* would later run a correction after the tireless Ali Abunimah exposed the doctored quotes, its mistranslation was in line with Zionist propaganda.

Herzl's strategy continues to be the strategy of Zionism and the State of Israel. Whereas state-sponsored anti-Semitism has disappeared, Israel must create it and conjure it up, as this is its major line of defence against any and all international criticisms and censure of its ongoing

colonisation of Palestine.

While the four permanent members of the UN Security Council censured Israel last week for its plans to expand yet again its colonial settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the US will surely veto a possible UN Security Council resolution condemning these colonial activities. Should this happen, we will immediately hear the Israeli and pro-Israeli chorus of condemnation of the international body as "anti-Semitic" yet again.

That this strategy has now run its course and no longer intimidates international actors has led to much panic in Zionist and Israeli circles. Israel and Zionism now understand well that when the world, including the United States (excepting Barack Obama), hears "anti-Semitism" as an argument to defend Israel, they understand it as an Israeli diversionary tactic to distract the world from Israeli Jewish *colonialism* and *colonial-settlements* on Palestinian land.

Make no mistake about it, anti-Semitism in Israeli discourse is and has been nothing short of camouflage for the continuation of Jewish colonisation of Palestine. Only the gullible continue to be fooled.