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Jules Chazanoff
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August 18, 1938

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When Israel Reigns

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Some ten years ago, during a series of lectures on the social value of the Zionist movement, I had the painful surprise of being violently taken to task by comrades of Jewish origin, accusing me of engaging in a veritable anti-Semitic campaign. The arguments put forward at the time, to legitimize a movement I considered inappropriate, failed to shake my convictions, and I remain, to this day, as fiercely opposed to the Jewish nationalism that is flourishing, not without some difficulty, in Palestine, as I was yesterday to this mobilization of spirits in favor of the unjustly oppressed “wandering” people.

However, the tragic incidents taking place in the territories of the “reconquered nation” force us, once again, to ask: is there a Jewish problem?

It’s obvious that Jews are persecuted in Romania, Poland and Germany. It’s also true that Mussolini, for reasons of foreign policy, has just declared war on Israel. We are aware of all this, and we understand the concern of human beings whose beliefs and lives are threatened, and for whom the future looks increasingly uncertain. But Jews are not the only victims of authoritarian regimes. They share the fate of all those who, for multiple and sometimes diver-

gent causes, are sacrificed to the ferocious law of the new societies that are being born in blood and crime, and the Catholics across the Rhine themselves know the cost of not adopting Hitler's religion. We must therefore consider that, however interesting the fate of the Israelites may be, subjected in any part of the world to the unspeakable treatment we know, it is no more – nor less – interesting than that of the millions of unfortunate people who suffer the misdeeds of a murderous civilization, and it seems as absurd to us to see the Jews found a nation as if we heard the Christians of Germany claim a territory to create a home.

In our view, then, there is no such thing as a specifically Jewish question; there is a social question that encompasses an incalculable number of problems to which a solution must be found. The Jewish problem is one of these.

Insofar as we can accept as accurate the statistics provided by the latest censuses, there are some ten million Jews spread across the various countries of Europe and America. It is safe to say that fifty percent of this population is assimilated or in the process of being assimilated, and that five million Jews therefore enjoy the freedoms and rights in force in the countries that have adopted them: America, England and France. That leaves the others, considered a national minority in Poland, Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary, and those in Germany and Austria, subject to terribly oppressive special laws since the advent of Hitler.

Assuming that the language, aspirations, culture, situation and different needs of the various categories of Jews scattered across the globe are not an obstacle to the formation of a nation: assuming that only the persecuted abandon an inhospitable land, can Palestine serve as a refuge for all the unfortunates in search of a home?

We have no choice but to reply that Palestine is not a land of settlement, that it cannot accommodate the millions of oppressed or starving Jews of Europe, and that, until now, a small minority – scarcely a hundred thousand men – has been able to settle there, with the help of Jewish high finance, aided by the support of the

British government. Unfortunately, however, this occupation was carried out to the detriment of the Arab population, who saw their property and jobs taken away by the immigrants.

At the start of the exodus, Arab landowners sold their land to the new arrivals, but the Arab people as a whole had nothing to gain, and everything to lose, from these operations, which were profitable for some. Some farmers temporarily found a market for their produce, and Arab workers found work in Jewish businesses. But as colonization proceeded, Jewish nationalism, like all nationalisms, was exacerbated, and the slogans "Buy Jewish products" and "Employ Jewish labor" became the inevitable slogans of Zionism.

For the Zionists," says Reginald Reynolds, an English journalist known for his liberalism:

There was never any question of settling among the Arabs and living alongside them as equals. They have, in Palestine, the intolerable arrogance of a people who consider themselves a superior race, and the Arabs hate them for the same reason that the Negro hates the white man of America.

It is clear, then, that this minority of Jews who have settled in Palestine, as if in a conquered land, have nothing in common with all the Israelites persecuted in Europe, and that it is they who provoke the violent reactions of the Arab population.

Space does not permit us to go into the subject at hand, but one thing is certain: Jewish penetration of Palestine can only be achieved by sacrificing the Arab population, who are defending themselves with the courage of despair. There can be no doubt that political issues are aggravating an acute conflict that began in the immediate aftermath of the war. Mussolini's attitude and burgeoning anti-Semitism are no strangers to Palestinian unrest. The Duce took advantage of the mess caused by the contradictory interests of world imperialism to consolidate his positions: he supported the Arab against the Jew, and that was good politics.

The curious thing is that the Arabs are calling for national independence and a democratic constitution, and these hopes are favored by Hitler and Mussolini and constantly opposed by Jewish Zionist organizations. The Jew, more reactionary than the Roman or German dictator, is beyond comprehension.

So let's stop talking about humanity. Palestine has nothing to do with the Jewish problem. We'll say more! Independent Palestine, worked by the Arabs who have lived there for thousands of years, even under the British protectorate, can once again become a hotbed of peace, whereas today it is nothing more than a factor in civil war that could degenerate into international war. Palestine will never be a Jewish nation; at worst, it can only become a country exploited by Jewish finance. And if we have always defended the Jews when Israel dies, we can only fight the minority of Jews who want Israel to reign.

P.-S. As I said in the course of this article, it's impossible to cover the entire Jewish problem in just a few dozen lines, so the above article is bound to be incomplete. In a forthcoming paper, we'll take a broader look at the exploitation of Judaism by totalitarian powers, and of the Jewish people as a whole by imperialist powers. And let it be said that we never confuse the Jewish people with Jewish capitalism.