

History final exam essay example

[Countries](#), [England](#)



Palestine was a province of the Ottoman Empire until it was conquered by the British in 1917, but its final status was not determined until it became a League of Nations mandate in 1922, remaining under British administration until 1948. Point 12 of Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points concerned both the Turkish areas of the former Ottoman Empire as well as the other nationalities that had been under Turkish rule, which were promised "an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development" (Wilson 1918). Point 5 was somewhat more vague, calling only for an "adjustment of 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" (Wilson 1918). Thanks to Ataturk's victories, Turkey did become a fully independent nation, but this was not the case for Syria, Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon and Jordan, all of which came under British and French rule. Indeed, under the provisions of the (secret) Sykes-Picot agreement of 1915, these two powers had already agreed to this division of territory once the war was over, but Wilson had never approved of such secret treaties. Nor by any reasonable standard were the needs and interests of the Arabs populations in these Mandates ever given equal weight to those of the colonial powers.

Under the provisions of the League Mandate, Britain had the legislative and administrative power in Palestine, with a promise of eventual self-government in the future. Britain controlled the judiciary, foreign relations, natural resources, taxes, customs duties, the police and military and was responsible for maintaining public order. In other words, Palestine was a

British colony in everything but name, although the Mandate also promised “ respect for the personal status of the various peoples and communities and for their religious interests” and that “ no discrimination of any kind shall be made between the inhabitants of Palestine on the ground of race, religion or language” (Palestine Mandate 1922). It also provided that the areas east of the Jordan River would be organized into a new mandate, then called Transjordan—or present-day Jordan. In the first section, the Mandate agreement also affirmed that the Balfour Declaration of November 1917 was still in effect and that the Jews would be permitted to establish a national homeland in Palestine, provided that “ nothing should be done which might prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine” (Palestine Mandate 1922). Clearly this part of the Mandate was not fulfilled at all in the long run, at least after Britain later attempted to partition Mandatory Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. It also specified that the Zionist organization, the Jewish Agency for Palestine, would be recognized as the official representative body for the Jews. Subsequent sections referred to provisions for Jewish citizenship of Palestine, land purchases and economic development. Wilson had been a supporter of the Balfour Declaration and a Jewish national homeland, even though this was not mentioned in the Fourteen Points, so this aspect of the Mandate was not too far removed from his own views. As for the Arab population, their situation fell short of the kind of autonomy and careful consideration of their interests, Wilson had promised, even though a careful reading of the document shows that he nowhere promised full independence to any colonial peoples under British and French rule.

Night and Fog (1955) described the concentration camps and death camps of Nazi-occupied Europe, from the time they were first organized until the defeat of Germany in 1945. They were a system of total repression and dehumanization in which those victims who were not exterminated immediately were slowly worked and starved to death or used in inhuman medical experiments. From the Nazi viewpoint, this was a system based on race, with all Jews and Gypsies slated for death and Slavs for slave labor. Political prisoners and resistance fighters were also sent to these camps, under the Night and Fog (Nacht und Nebel) Decree of 1941, from which the film got its title. Franz Fanon was a psychiatrist from Martinique who fought in the Algerian struggle for independence from France in the 1950s. His book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) is widely considered one of the classic works in the anti-colonialist genre, particularly in its description of racism and the all-pervading sense of repression and inferiority felt by nonwhites in the Third World. Racism is what the colonial system and the Nazi system had most in common, along with the belief that 'inferior' peoples existed only to serve the Master Race. Most colonized peoples also lived in conditions of great poverty and oppression, although perhaps not as extremely violent as the Nazi camps. After all, the colonial powers did want the native populations to labor for them, so enough of them had to be kept alive for that purpose, although the system was highly destructive of their culture, language and human dignity.

Fanon argued that the peasants and marginalized peoples of the colonies were the only force capable of overthrowing imperialist rule, and that violent struggle against their white masters was necessary for their psychological

health and well-being, given how they had been dehumanized by colonialism. Under decolonization, the oppressed and powerless would come into their own for the first time so that “ the last shall be first”, and generally it could only be achieved after violent conflict (Fanon, 2004, p. 2). Western capitalist nations have milder forms of social control, but in the colonies it is far more repressive and authoritarian, without any liberal or democratic pretenses. For the colonized, existence is truly wretched without adequate food, clothing and shelter, forced to labor for their white overlords, and the main division is by race (Fanon, p. 4). All the victims of this system are seething with envy, hatred and resentment, looking forward to the time when they can just blow up the whole system. This was also how the Third Reich and its system of concentration camps finally ended, because it was defeated and destroyed by military force. Its victims did rebel, as in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1943 and even in death camps like Auschwitz, while there were underground resistance movements all over occupied Europe. In the end, though, the Nazis were not overthrown and destroyed by internal revolts but by defeat at the hands of the Allies. In this respect, the revolts in the colonies were at least as difficult, at least in the absence of major assistance from the outside world.

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