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# A SOCIALIST IN PALESTINE

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*By*

J. RAMSAY MACDONALD

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JEWISH SOCIALIST LABOUR CONFEDERATION POALE-ZION.

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# A SOCIALIST IN PALESTINE

BY

J. RAMSAY MACDONALD

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PRICE SIXPENCE.





# A SOCIALIST IN PALESTINE.

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## I.—THE OLD AND THE NEW.

A REPUTATION is a risky possession and a most exacting one. If every seeker after curiosities does not find what reputation has advertised, its possessor, whether man or thing, is at once held to be a fraud, and written down as something to be avoided. I have a deep sympathy for everything that has a reputation, and this is perhaps why I am so rarely disappointed. I have met many people who have been to Palestine, who have gone from Beersheba to Dan and from Jaffa to Jericho, and who have told me that "it was not worth the money," that glory (if ever it had glory) has departed from it, that I should be disappointed with it, and so on and so on. I have now been there and am back in the midst of the great miracle of London, happy that I can still enjoy myself in many places and that I am still young enough to worship heroes and join in the delights that the generations have found in the scenes that my heroes saw and the places where they dwelt.

To the eyes of Western Christendom, as well as to those of the Jewish and the Moslem worlds, Palestine is the Holy Land, and a glamour of religious romance enfolds it like a sunset that never changes into a garish light, nor sinks into a featureless darkness. One has no longer to approach it from the rough and tumbling sea which made the voyage from Alexandria to Jaffa a journey of extreme discomfort, with a landing place that might be unapproachable when one got to it. The armies that marched from Egypt to the conquest of Palestine kept touch with their base by water pipes and railway lines, and so the Egyptian Railway Time Tables have an appendix showing that if you leave Cairo of an evening you can have late breakfast next morning in Jerusalem. It is already dark when you leave, and when you reach the canal-crossing at Kantara, lines of electric lights dim the stars, and throw sheaves of bright yellow beams to dance on the dark blue waters of the canal. You leave your train (because the French made trouble about a bridge which they tolerated during the war), cross by a floating bridge of boats, and in the midst of a sandy desolation on the other side, you find a Parisian train with restaurant and sleeping carriages waiting to receive you. Thus you cross the desert of rolling sands, barren as the sea shore, with here and there an oasis of palm trees by which the Bedouin plows with camels and dwells

in his flat-topped mud huts ; thus you cross the land of the Philistines, which I found in the morning blushing like a bride under almond blossoms, and came to the villages of the tribe of Dan.

At the junction of Ludd, a city of the Philistines and the place where Peter cured a man of the palsy, now a camp of our army of occupation, a Socialist deputation met me. They belonged to that advance guard of Israelites returning to Zion, and they had come from many lands seeking not only the home of their fathers, but a dwelling place which they are to build in Socialist fashion and upon foundations of communal idealism. They were a happy, fraternal company of men and women, brown of face and sturdy of limb, everyone engaged in hard manual labour, making roads and homes, and planting the waste places with groves, and tilling the land for harvests. In a car they brought me to Jaffa, the great port of entry for the Jewish home-seekers and the headquarters of their activities.

In Jaffa hope and tradition mingle and sometimes create strife like the meeting of conflicting currents. I looked with a happy eye upon the old city built upon a hill, which offers a precipitous front to the swelling waters of the Mediterranean. What a story was its ; beginning in myth and entering majestically into the morning light of history. Hither the cedars came from Lebanon for the Temple ; thither Jonah went on board ship ; here Peter raised Dorcas to life, and here is shown the house of Simon the tanner ; this was ground where the Jews under the Maccabees, and the Gentiles under Crusading leaders, fought and won fame. To-day the Moslem is in possession, and he looks with apprehension upon the extending streets of the new town of Jewish settlers to the north, and is ready to listen to his leaders who wish for strife and to engage in riots and pogroms.

But the Jewish town spreads on the sands. The foundations of a new Garden City have been laid ; in the middle of the sand dunes a big factory is at work turning out stones every day sufficient to build a house. There are Labour headquarters, Trade Unions, co-operative printing works, carpentry shops, boot and shoe works. Whatever Labour can do by its own organisation is done without the intervention of the Capitalist, and if the sand on the one hand and the Moslem on the other give trouble, the heart of the Jewish worker is buoyant. He has left a bad old world behind him : he is to be the creator of a new one.

Wherever I have gone in Palestine I have found that its physical geography curiously blends with its traditions. Between Jaffa and Jerusalem is, roughly, a broad plain and a broad area

of broken hills—the one appropriate nestling place of poetry, of pleasant and peaceful cultivation, of generous ease; the other of untamed men, of warriors and robbers, of high romance. The one is the Plain of Sharon, the other, the Western part of the Hills of Judea. But, as a counteraction to the natural aspects of the Plain, it was also a highway for armies as well as for caravans, and when the tribe of Dan was settled on Sharon it had to defend the approach to Jerusalem from the west. “Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path that biteth the horses’ heels so that the rider shall fall backward.” The tribe of Benjamin held the hills, and of it, it has been said: “Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf; in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.”

On the Jaffa edge of the Plain of Sharon is a finely equipped agricultural college founded by a Baron Rothschild to promote Jewish settlement. I found a good crowd of students ready to greet me, but evening was closing in and I had to go on. The Land of Benjamin was glowing under the setting sun, and darkness was spreading over Sharon. The hills are entered by a narrow defile, known as the “Door of the Valley,” and up and down this have passed from time immemorial armies in triumph and in rout. It was dark when I got so far, but the moon was rising. A house of dirty white stands there for rest and refreshment, but it seemed too forbidding to enter, though a boy came out and offered us coffee. I crossed the long, winding hill road under a moon which rode turbulently through clouds and, after about a couple of hours and with a feeling that the journey had ended in an anti-climax, I passed into yellowish streets dimly lit as though ashamed of themselves after the magnificent road, past big ugly buildings that were obviously institutions and might have been workhouse or lunatic asylums. I had reached Jerusalem.

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## II.—JERUSALEM.

**I** HAVE described Jerusalem elsewhere\*; and so in this article I am to say nothing about streets, crowds, sights, holy places, and the feelings which they awoke within me. In Jerusalem, I met the leaders of the “New Return,” the leaders of the “Present Occupation,” and the leaders of our Government. So I found in the Holy City of the Holy Land not only walls that were ruined and places that are shrines, but ideas,

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\* See Chapt. IV.



movements, conflicts that belong to the future, and these I discussed with men who mayhap will be spoken of in long days to come because of the work they have in hand in these times.

Jerusalem was essentially a place of defence. Perched 2,600 feet on hills, itself cut by the valley between Mount Moriah and Mount Zion, defended on three sides by deep river beds, it drew within its walls warriors rather than worshippers, but being upon a road that led trade North and South, and on one that went East and West, it also became a market. Thus it also became a capital, and the site of the great national temple. None of the older traditions of Jerusalem were sacred. It remained a Canaanite city after the surrounding country was conquered, because its strength defied the Israelites. The places where the Ark had been laid, like Shiloh, had already become sacred, and other spots had become associated with the lives of the patriarchs. But so soon as Jerusalem fell, its physical geography determined that it should be the capital of the united Jewish State, and the holy place of Jewish patriotic devotion and faith. It is a cold place and a bleak place, and, in consequence, an invigorating place. When the people on the plains were being softened, Jerusalem remained "the lair of the lion of Judah." It symbolised in itself the fact that the Israelite nation was to take upon itself the character of a hill people. In the poetry and spiritual thought of the Israelites, the hills are a constant inspiration, and their minds seeking symbols by which to express their ideals always found them in the hills. If you stand on Mount Olive and survey the mass of heights which gather round Jerusalem, and see Jerusalem itself standing on its high perch, you understand the history of the people whose political and religious capital it was. Here you gain a conception of the Jew as a warrior, not as a moneylender or petty trader; a wild, untamable mountaineer living in fortified towns; a patriot, not a cosmopolitan; one who would fight to the last hill-top, and then surrender only to fight again.

But when one has taken the hills into one's heart and felt how much they meant to the people, one has then to think how the strength supplied by nature only partly explains the history of the tribe of Judah and the capital of Israel. Physical geography is much, but not all. Jewish leaders knew that their land could be conquered, and whilst they extolled its strength, and translated its hills into moral values, these values themselves became independent inspiration.

His circumstances playing upon the mind of man create forces that are quite different in their modes of action from the circumstances themselves. So, whilst the physical surroundings



of the people had an influence upon their religious mentality, that mentality made good the weaknesses of their surroundings. Praising Jerusalem for its beauty and strength, a Jewish singer nevertheless sees hostile kings gathered around her, but "They saw it and so they marvelled; they were troubled and hastened away," because "God is known in her palaces for a refuge." There was spirit in the hearts as well as weapons in the hands of the soldiers of Israel, and without the former the latter would never have made Jewish history. The Jewish religion was itself a strength equal to the hills, giving assurance when their hills failed them and their enemies were at their gates.

So, from that standpoint on Mount Olivet, you must also give due value to the Temple, the ruined courts and walls of which you can see across the Kedron as a noble open space with the Dome of the Rock in the midst of it. No one can explain Jewish history without the hills of Judea, nor can anyone explain it without the Temple on Mount Moriah. Both have to be understood.

So, no explanation of the Zionism of to-day is adequate which leaves out of account the spiritual traditions of Judaism. True, the Jew is persecuted and needs a home, but if you wish to understand Zionism you need to understand the minds of the little crowds that gather to wail and pray by the wall of the Temple as well as the pogroms in Eastern Europe. The Jew seeks a national home in Palestine not only because he is denied a home elsewhere, but because Palestine has always been calling to him from his heart—and he must go.

It is important to note that the Zionist movement has appealed with great force to Jewish Socialists, who have always been supposed to be the most completely emancipated from all influences but economic ones. The Jew, uprooted from his home and the surroundings which made his history real to him, was supposed to have cast behind him all that fine network of tradition and sentiment which some pseudo-moderns ask us to believe to be nothing but trammels. As a matter of fact, this economic materialism has been the reaction of a people deeply injured in its very soul—an unnatural and unhealthy state of mind which began to be changed so soon as a return to Palestine became possible.

Zionism has become the inspiration of Jewish labour. It is opposed by the two sections of Judaism with which Socialism has least in common. The Scribes and Pharisees, the people for whom the Jewish religion is but a formalism, still survive in Judaism. They detest and fear all innovation, and have the blindness and the stiff-neckedness of the proud tribe of

Judah at its worst. They oppose. In Jerusalem they do their best to dam up the streams of the Zionist return. Those of us who were taught to detest the whole tribe of High Priests and Sanhedrims require no guidance in determining our attitude to them.

The other section is composed of the rich plutocratic Jew, who is the true economic materialist. He is the person whose views upon life make one anti-Semitic. He has no country, no kindred. Whether as a sweater or a financier, he is an exploiter of everything he can squeeze. He is behind every evil that Governments do, and his political authority, always exercised in the dark, is greater than that of Parliamentary majorities. He has the keenest of brains and the bluntest of consciences. He detests Zionism because it revives the idealism of his race, and has political implications which threaten his economic interests.

In little hollows, as it were, Judaism retains small groups of fine idealists of liberal thought and culture, and some of these oppose Zionism. With them my reflections have nothing to do.

I have been led into these comments by the thoughts which came into my mind when the life of Palestine, its story of old times and its movements of to-day, entered into my own. In a sentence, "materialist conceptions" appear here in all the unscientific nakedness of the Mid-Victorian bourgeois individualist mind, yearning nevertheless to glorify the only god it could worship in safety to itself—profits and property. Jerusalem is a rich study in how circumstance and spirit, man and his habitation, flowing together in the energy of effort, form the creative will of history.

### III.—GALILEE.

**I** CONCLUDE these papers with some reflections upon Galilee. Here, two different scenes enter into our traditions—Nazareth and the Sea of Galilee. Both belong to the hills, one held in a hollow at the top, and the other sunk deep at the bottom. It is a fruitful land, well watered by the streams which Lebanon supplies and refreshed by night dews; in the low plain of Gennesaret the climate is warm and vegetation abundant. Thus, of the tribes that held the Galilean soil, Issachar, which held the great fertile plain of Esdraelon, "bowed his shoulder to bear, and became a servant unto tribute"; Zebulun, which occupied the hills, was turbulent; Naphtali, which possessed also hilly country that was fertile, was "as a hind let loose." Again we see man and nature in organic unity. Galilee was in close

contact with the outer world and mixed with it. Great roads east and west from the sea, and north and south from Damascus, roads which sought Rome, Baghdad, Egypt, and Syria, went through it, and on them were brought news of great happenings, and so the people were kept from narrowness and particularism. Thus it was that the more haughty and aloof Judea looked down upon the rougher and more robust Galilean with his rude tongue, his turbulent disposition, and his contacts with the Gentiles. But the Galilean had good stuff in him. He produced rebels not a few, and gained the reputation of caring more for honour than for money. When his race fell on evil days he held its sanctuaries in his keeping. He was open to new ideas, however, and as the cradle for revivals in faith his mind was fitting. He was in a world of romantic and venturesome life.

In Nazareth Christ grew into manhood, and there was no more appropriate nursery for him in Palestine. Its position, high up in a cup in the hills, rich in its soil and beautiful in its surroundings, contributed to the making of a mind of delicate grace. It was a busy place, a channel through which, or by which, flowed invigorating streams of pompous rulers, men at arms, caravans, pilgrims; it stood at the wayside of great avenues of both war and trade. We can easily imagine the impetus that such surroundings, and such goings and comings, gave to a sensitive being. As its caravans and its processions wended away out of sight they bore the spirit of the lad away with them.

But Nazareth was more than that. From the rim of the hills which surround it, one looks upon places whose history stirs the heart of every Jew. Tabor and Carmel, Lebanon and Hermon, are in clear view; across the plain of Esdraelon is Gilboa, where Gibeon fought and Saul and his sons died; the plain itself is the stage whereon were fought most of the great conflicts which make the history of the Israelities a thrilling story; the road going straight across the plain towards the South was the pilgrim way to Jerusalem. Thus, whilst Nazareth would nourish the patriotism of the Jew, it would also keep it free of exclusiveness and lift it out of itself by bringing it into touch with a wider and larger life.

The mind nourished in Nazareth would be Jewish. It would have its roots deep in its community's traditions. But it would belong to the world. In the ever-shifting pageantry of men and things, its Judaism would be divested of its hardness, and its virtues would be expounded into their universal truths. That would be so both on its political and religious sides. The words uttered at Jacob's Well to the woman of Samaria expressed ideas that were more easy for a child of Nazareth than for a child



of Jerusalem or of Shechem to entertain: "Neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father; but the time cometh and now is when true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." When the time came for transforming the national religion of Judaism into a world faith, Nazareth and Galilee supplied the impetus.

Over the hills from Nazareth to the East is the deep valley where the Sea of Galilee lies nearly 700 ft. below the level of the Mediterranean. To-day, its shores, but for Tiberias, are all but tenantless, and the sheen of its waters is almost unbroken by a boat. Two thousand years ago the scene was very different. Boats in great numbers sailed upon it, and at least nine cities stood upon its shores. It was ringed round with industry. Its fish trade extended far along the Mediterranean and its fish curers sought markets as remote as those exploited by our own North-East coast traders. Mixed with the true Galilean towns were Greek and Roman cities, cities of commerce and cities of military administration. To these Christ did not go, and so some of the greatest of the Lake cities are not even mentioned in the Gospels. But the light fell upon them, and the sojourners there carried it abroad in their hearts. Christ found His first followers from men who worked in the open. The Lake was subject to many storms, and the fishermen were skilled in their craft. They were the children of the winds and the waves and the hills. They lived and worked for the most part at the northern end of the Lake where the breezes were freshest and the conditions least enervating. A sturdy lot they must have been. One day I saw two men drawing up a boat. They were strong, solid men, tanned, weather-beaten and bearded, and I then knew what manner of men listened to the new teaching. Moreover, like all men who work at night on the sea, the fishermen of Galilee were always on the *qui vive* for new spiritual teaching. Their minds were open, so open, indeed, that they have been branded with their fellow Galileans as being seditious, and they were independent, calmer, and less impulsive than the town workers and those engaged in commerce, and so, far more fitted to stand persistently, once their allegiance was won.

The Psalms and Isaiah and the Gospels have had such a special influence in forming our minds that it is hard for us to think of them as the spirit of a land and a people. We can with difficulty conceive their poetry and symbolism as the transfiguration of simple everyday scenes and events. But here you find that it is so, and in your wanderings you see the symbols and the parables by the wayside, in the fields, on the hills. The great revelation of Palestine is that men draw their finest thoughts



and noblest truths from simple and sincere things—and also this, that the conflict between vulgarity and beauty, between the authority of force and of radiant truth is still the dominating concern of creation.

This has a close bearing upon the spirit of our Socialist movement and upon its tactic and method. Many of the Palestinian voices seemed to me to call for a return to our old Independent Labour Party appeal.

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#### IV.—FROM JERUSALEM TO NAZARETH.

**A**FTER far wanderings I seem to have come home, for I feel as familiar with this place as I do with the benty hillocks of Lossiemouth. I write in a room at Nazareth, and for days I have been in places where I have lived without setting foot in them before, places which I have now seen as though I had, in dreams, dwelt in them for as long as I can remember.

In the mud, in the dark crowded bazaars, in the narrow, slippery cobbled streets of the Holy City; on Zion; looking across the Valley of Kedron, with its myriad graves, on to the Mount of Olives; walking round the walls, entering by this gate or going out by that; in the room of the Last Supper; at the place where Stephen was stoned; by the Pool of Siloam—the peace of many Sabbaths awaited me, as the dead are said to await us. They were keeping tryst. No spot in the world is like this. The voice of the importunate would-be guide sounded as though coming from a far land. I must have lived here in a generation now sunk in the misty grey of long past years. I knew the city better than the guides.

In some places this feeling is overwhelming. In some where it ought to be, it is not, because they have been desecrated by lies and superstition, and the vanities and vulgarities of men have evicted the spirits and offer the pilgrim only smells and darkness and candles at five piastres a time. Bethlehem is one of these. There, three rival sects light altar lamps with curses; one cuts off the corner of a carpet lest the hated feet of another sect should tread upon it; a Mohammedan soldier guards the spot of the Nativity lest rival Christians should cut each other's throats in front of it. I wonder what he, in whose memory the lamps are kept lit, thinks of it all. I fled in search of the purification of fresh air and the simple stall.

But go down the Street of David from the Jerusalem Jaffa Gate, plunge into its gloom, its colour, its stifling crowd; turn

at the end into the Temple Street and pursue it till suddenly you come out on the vast sunny space of ruined wall and fountain with the Mosque of Omar rising solemnly in its midst, and you will know Jerusalem. This is Mount Moriah ; here the Temple stood. Stand by the Mosque of Aksa and look down that long white vista of walls and gates, steps and domes, fountains and platforms for prayer, see the brightness of the sun and the gloom of the cypresses, and behold something which is not only fair of the fairest to the eye but glorious of the most glorious to the soul. I have seen much of the goodly things that this world has to show, but nothing to compare with this.

The trouble of the devout is to get away from the puny efforts of men to guard the sacred spots as one does a candle in the wind, and call them his own *and fashion them after himself*. Go down into the valley of Kedron and cross up Mount Olivet to Gethsemane. It is walled in, it is imprisoned, it is spoilt. Near by the gnarled olive of the agony, a brutal stone records the benefaction of an American woman—in pretentious Latin forsooth. Go by the path winding round Mount Olivet to Bethany, and see how an architect who could not build a pig-sty has made a monument over Lazarus' tomb, but you will seek in vain for the atmosphere of the home of Mary and Martha and the benignity of Christ. But go on over the barren limestone hills and down into the hot valleys whereon is the way to Jericho. There the solitary wayfarer might still be beset by thieves, and at the side of the road you pass the inn of the Good Samaritan, as much a comforting refuge by the way as it was nearly two thousand years ago. You expect to see the good man come from the door to pursue his journey.

What a charm there is in the very names. The Hills of Judah, the Mountains of Moab, Gilgal, the Valley of Jezreel, Gilboa, Carmel, Mount Hermon. To-day I left Jerusalem bound, like Saul, for Damascus. The road lies over the Hills of Judah, where the limestone gives but bare subsistence and where the villages look woebegotten and ragged perched on the top of their hills and hillocks. I went up and down, twisted and turned, was cut by the hill-top winds and warmed by the sun in the valleys. From the summits of the passes I could see the land at my feet from the Dead Sea to Mount Hermon's snow, from the Mediterranean at Jaffa and Cæsarea to the Mountains of Moab, Ammon, Gilead and Bashan. Nearly every place you pass or see on this road has its name written on your heart. The road goes past, or near, Mizpah, Beeroth, Bethel ; it takes you to the well where the conversation between Christ and the woman of Samaria took place ; it brings you to Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal,

with Shechem lying between. There you refresh yourself, and wander through one of the most typically Oriental towns. This was the capital of the Samaritans, and here you meet with that small remnant of Jews who pay no homage to the prophets of Jerusalem. Their little synagogue, so carefully locked (for it holds the oldest copy of their Book) with double keys, is like a toy place, and yet it has that quality which whispers of sacred things.

Then after further ups and downs with peeps at the far-away hills and seas, I came to where a cart waited me near the spot where Saul fought his last battle at Gilboa. As I jolted and joggled over the unmade road, I tried to recall some of the beautiful lines of David's lament. I was on my way to see the new thought nestling amidst the old tradition. In a little town of tents at the foot of Gilboa, by the spring where Gideon is said to have tested the endurance of his army, faithful men and women have come together to rebuild Palestine and fence it against Capitalism.

They work at roads, at planting, at any of the essential services; they doctor and they teach. I saw them at the anvil, the bench, the kitchen table, the fields, the dentist's machine. They are on terms of economic equality and they draw upon the common stores. They are tested first on public works, where they must work for a year, and the loafer and sponger will be speedily excluded. They came to a place all but waste, to swampy ground and a barren hill side. They are building, they are planting olives and vines and pines and eucalyptus and cypress. They are starting nurseries to supply themselves and others with plants. I saw them happy, industrious and hopeful, and in a building with a mud floor they offered me hospitality and revealed minds as sunny as the plain, which we could see through the door, then was. They will fail, the man of practical intelligence will say. I hope he is wrong, but if they do and are scattered, they will have clothed the northern sides of Mount Gilboa, made rich the waste lands at its foot, and cheered and refreshed everyone who will come in contact with their work. They are believers.

As I sat talking with one who might have been an Isaiah, red tints spread over the sky and the hills, and I remembered that Nazareth was still a good way on upon its lofty perch. So I bade them farewell, in rapidly deepening darkness, bumped back to the highway, and in a night, glorious with moon and stars, climbed up and up and up to a bed in Nazareth.

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## V.—NEW WINE IN OLD BOTTLES.

I AM tempted to go on telling the story of journeys in lands, every corner of which has witnessed scenes and sheltered people whose memories are the life of history, and every prospect of which is pleasing and startling to the eye. But of that, I have written enough, and now the journey is all over save for the return. I have come to the stick of the rocket. The Mediterranean, which I have been seeing in glimpses from inland heights or in a wide sweep from the top of Mount Carmel, is now under me, and my face is towards the setting sun. Across the sea comes news of Labour victories, and the incidents of the political daily round. Our mud-caked Ford cars are being scraped and repaired after their heroic journeys; our ruts are being trodden down by donkeys and camels; no more will the Bedouin scurry at our hoots, and shoulder his ass to the side of the road. All is past!

But I must add a few jottings and thoughts appropriate to homeward ponderings. I have been in Egypt, Palestine, and Syria, and they are all seething with an after-the-war unsettlement. Our "only ones fit to govern" delivered blank cheques to Arabs and Jews, so anxious were they to prove the universal righteousness of our cause. Now we cannot cash the cheques. Moreover, we paid inflaming devotions to Nationalism as a creed, and as a right, and we are now asked to prove our sincerity, but we have "much possessions." The storm is over; the ship has been saved; the sailors, who prayed so fervently, wish to return to their old life, and to shirk the burdens of righteousness. But the world has heard, and the world now looks on. The Egyptian, the Arab, the Jew, want to know what we meant and what we are now to do to make good our promises.

I still hold that the Egyptian problem is the simplest of all. But the most horrible of all fiends, political assassination, has appeared as the result of a policy which always has been, always will be, its parent. When will we learn not to be afraid of radical constitutional opinions? When will we have eyes to see that suppressing that opinion, or declaring it outlaw, or asking the world to believe it to be mischievous, has the certain result of strengthening a revolting violence? The ostracising of Zaglul Pasha because he has become bitter, or personal in his motives, or because he is awkward, is nothing but blind stupidity, of which no Englishman should be guilty. We have stirred up the East by our education and our war and our proclamations; we are afraid to meet the consequences. It is another case of new wine in old bottles, but instead of attributing the bursting to natural



causes, we regard it as the work of the devil. So, without injury to our moral self esteem, we go further into trouble.

I am glad that Lord Allenby seems to have thwarted the mischievous mind of Mr. Churchill, and those who think as he does, but Lord Allenby must show more political genius than he has done. The light seems to be in him, but there are two Lord Allenbys—the soldier and the civilian, and the one rules one day and the other the next. Before I left London I had evidence of Lord Allenby's limitations; in Egypt I had evidence of his good intentions. But his confusion of purpose and policy, his attempt to be liberal and reactionary, ought to be ended without delay. It neither suppresses assassination groups nor allows constitutionalism to grow. It will never set Egypt on an even keel.

In Palestine the problem takes a different and a very novel form. It is still the conflict between the Middle Ages and the Twentieth Century, but in this case it is caused by the immigration of people, and not only by the growth of ideas within a nation. Mr. Balfour made a declaration which meant to every Jew that Palestine was to revert to his government, and that once again he was to take his place amongst the nations of the world. Probably Mr. Balfour did not know what he was talking about, but the Government is now doing what it can to show that Mr. Balfour's pledges to the Jews were of the same worthless character as Mr. Bonar Law's to the miners. The flood of Jewish immigration which immediately began to flow roused the fears of the Arabs (who had also been promised all the badges and laurel wreaths of nationality), and the masterful attitude of some Jews roused Arab anger. The result was the beginning of an awkward and dangerous racial feud.

Moreover, the new immigration brought in new ideas. Socialism and Trade Unionism came with the immigrants, and the Jewish workmen demanded a higher standard of life than the Arab. The old Arab leaders saw their position threatened, and at once took steps to defend themselves. At various times and in various places there have been anti-Jewish riots, and the prospects are still anything but peaceful. Fortunately in Palestine the High Commissioner has been trained in politics. When he was Home Secretary in the Asquith War Coalition I thought that he yielded far too much to those who clamoured for "D.O.R.A." repression, but here, he seems to be true to his Liberal principles, and, in consequence, is handling a delicate position with tact and patience. Time is on the side of the peace-maker, and a consistent policy of even-handed justice and a patient pursuit of an Arab-Jewish concordant will prevent Palestine from being the scene of racial feud.

In Syria, I had few opportunities to investigate political matters. I was told that it would be difficult to get people to speak, and an attempt to get a Conference of some editors and publicists failed, I was told, on account of the awe in which the French authorities are held. The "occupation" here is much in evidence. I found French troops, mostly coloured of the blackest hues, everywhere. An intense French propaganda is evidently being carried on. The state of the country is not good, and from merchants in the Damascus bazaars, and people with whom I conversed in hotels and trains, I heard but one long drawn-out complaint of bad trade. How far that is only part of the world's disease, and how far it is an indication of the decay of Syrian commerce or its revolution, I had no means of ascertaining. It is quite evident, however, that the war has left Syria unsettled and unhappy, and that the new ways into which it will have to settle will not be the old ways.

That France is unpopular, and that the Syrian does not want French protection is pretty clear. I met no one in Syria who took the opposite view. Long before the war French agents had been working amongst the Arabs. I met some of the agents, and now, I am not quite sure what they are doing. They are engaged in some political activities, and some of our officials suspect them in Palestine. There are also suspicions attached to the Latin Catholics and their association with the Arab leaders in an anti-Jewish propaganda (which is becoming more and more anti-British), requires some explanation. But this is a land of rumour and suspicion, and one must be wary lest he believes like a fool.

One of our representatives in a district which is specially difficult, discussed his troubles with me one evening. He was, by the by, one of those many admirable liberal-minded officials now becoming plentiful, who are turning to us for help, and who pray for an increase of our power at home. He dwelt upon our relations with France somewhat dolefully, and foresaw terrible disasters here unless men of common sense and generous minds come forward to guide the policies of both countries through these transition years.

Our own policy is plain. We should regard ourselves as friends in the background, guarding against evil, applying negative commandments rather than positive ones, beginning good things always with the co-operation of the people themselves, and less as Government than as private and spontaneous effort, and guarding as much as possible against taking upon ourselves responsibility for a Government that ought to become more and more self-government. British officials should be reduced to a

minimum, and they should regard themselves mainly as advisers. We have still a great reputation for justice here, and though deputations and friends tell me that our recent actions have done that much damage, a wise policy will not only conserve what remains, but enable us to regain what we have lost.

The two great obstacles in our way are : first of all, the official who comes with a purely military mind to his task, who thinks of a British Empire of subject peoples being ruled by Englishmen, whose ideas of efficiency are English and nothing else. This man over-governs and makes a mess of things. And the other is the man of commercial interests, who thinks that his store is the Empire, and that his profits must be made sure by British political control exercised by British officials, soldiers, and police. He knows nothing of politics, and cares less—except when he confuses economic materialistic advantage for himself with good government. I am back more convinced than ever that if we had at home a Government inspired by a Labour and Socialist intelligentsia, the rough places here would be made smooth, and the moral reputations of our country would shine anew in the world.

## VI.—ZIONISM AND PALESTINE.

**I**T is very difficult for one brought up in the Christian faith to regard Palestine as a geographical area or a secular State. The spirit which drove the Crusaders eastwards has gone ; only in obscure and insignificant quarters is there any feeling against the Moslem as such. And yet, Palestine remains in our minds a special land, lying above and beyond purely political thoughts, obedient to a destiny and enshrining a tradition which in a peculiarly intimate way bring human history under the control of Divine purpose. Hence it was that when the armies of the conquering Allies marched into Jerusalem, for a moment a thrill of deep satisfaction passed over Christendom, and, in their fervour, people spoke of "the Last Crusade." They went further. They saw visions of prophecies fulfilled ; they saw the return of the Israelites to Zion. Without thinking very much what they meant, they spoke of the "national home" thus provided for the scattered and persecuted tribes.

Of course, all this did mischief. The Palestinian Moslem heard the words and saw the satisfaction, and was offended. The religious conflicts of the Middle Age were being continued, after all, he thought, and the Christian West was still at war with him. But that agitation of spirit soon passed. The intelligent Moslem



is generous. He whose faith so fully possesses him understood how it was that at such a moment the stilled pools of Christian feeling rippled and splashed, and he also understood that stillness would soon come again. Knowing his own heart, he knew ours, and was not afraid that our attitude indicated any persisting hostility.

The mischief that has gone below the surface had another cause. We encouraged an Arab revolt against Turkey by promising to create an Arab Kingdom from the Arab provinces of the Ottoman Empire—including Palestine. At the same time, we were encouraging the Jews to help us, by promising them that Palestine would be placed at their disposal for settlement and government, and, also at the same time, we were secretly making with France the Sykes-Picot agreement partitioning the territory which we had instructed our Governor-General of Egypt to promise to the Arabs. The story is one of crude duplicity, and we cannot expect to escape the reprobation which is its proper sequel. No one who has felt the under-currents of Eastern movements can console himself with the belief that the Arab has forgotten or forgiven, or that the moral evil we committed will speedily cease to have political influence. Our treatment of the Moslem has been a madness.

That is the background of present-day Palestinian problems. In the foreground is an active array of suspicions and fears, traditional hatreds and economic conflicts, conservatism and revolt—the agitation of the Arab caught in the swirl of Jewish immigration.

The Palestinian problem hinges upon the peculiar traditions and psychology of the Jew, and the Christian belief in Judaic prophecy. The Jew has been a wanderer and a cosmopolitan for many generations, and yet he has never ceased to be an exile. His foot has found no home, but his heart has never forgotten Jerusalem. Whilst he has been exemplary in carrying out his civic obligations, in his innermost being he has owned allegiance to no State. By the outer wall of the desecrated Temple on Mount Moriah, hour by hour, day, by day, and generation by generation, can be seen little groups of men and women, praying, moaning, weeping, lighting pale candles, kissing the stones that to them are dear. They are the very picture of abject misery clinging to faith. They wait for the restoration of Zion. They are Israel. Their wail and their hope are in every Jewish heart. Nothing is stranger for the *blasé* materialist and man of the world than to see how in recent years, from every nation under the sun, Jews—the proletariat from whom has been crushed almost the last remnant of national tradition and religious



belief, equally with the *bourgeoisie* whose prosperity has brought upon them a similar fate—have listened to this alluring call, and their hearts have gone back to Palestine.

The Zionist movement is not this exclusively, but from this it draws its vitality. Israel, after many generations, has turned towards Palestine, as migrating birds obey the call of the seasons. Physical necessity has also applied its spur, and so, when we invited the migration to begin, those who were most ready to respond were in Russia, the Ukraine, Poland, and Eastern Europe. Many of them were agriculturists, enough of them were trained both on farms and in agricultural colleges to be leaders of the various settlements that were formed; a good proportion were college and university men qualified for one or other of the professions; all were willing to work and to do heavy work, even to stone-breaking, road-making, swamp-draining, and tree-planting. I have seen them at such work. They were in rough labourers' garments, covered with mud and dust, tanned, unshaven, hard-handed; but no disguise was thick enough to conceal a bearing, a tone of voice, a free expertness of action belonging to men whose heads had been trained before their muscles. Truly, this is an immigration of the longing ones.

I shall never forget a night I spent as their guest. We had stuck in darkness and mud shortly after crossing the Jordan at Jacob's Bridge, and were thrown upon their hands. About a score of men gathered round the tables of the common refectory, upon the floor of which there was much mud; but that could not be helped, as the whole place was in the midst of mud. Otherwise it was beautifully clean. At the head of the company was one trained in an American agricultural college. After supper we discussed not only the work of the settlement and Zionism, but European and American politics, literature, philosophy, art, and religion, and the men were keenly alert to everything going on in the world. Their work was hard and absorbing, but they were happy. Late in the evening we were escorted through more mud to our sleeping place, a large, airy room with a stone floor, upon which we had to deposit clay at every step, containing two beds with spotless sheets, upon which we slept in sound comfort. In the morning I rose with the sun. Whilst I was dressing, a cheery band of women with hoes on their shoulders passed my window on their way to work. The little community was already busy.

Such is the Jew who is going to Palestine. He is an idealist and a worker. He has a vision of a Palestine which is to be the home of his people, and love enters much into his labour. When he is digging, sowing, and planting, he offers tribute and homage;

in his work there is far more of the feeling that he is giving to Palestine than taking for himself. But this does not mean that he is a mere sentimentalist and amateur. His conception of his work is definite ; his methods are practical. He is creating experimental nurseries for trees ; he is gathering together stores of such machinery as will be useful in Palestinian conditions ; he is studying the art of terracing ; he is preparing to harness the Jordan for electric power and irrigation ; he has begun handicrafts, co-operative societies, and so on. At one of the newest of these settlements, that of Nuris, at the foot of Mount Gilboa, consisting of 150 people, I found them engaged in breaking up waste land and planting the hillside. They were to put in 14,000 eucalyptus trees, 4,000 pines, 500 cypresses, 10,000 olives, together with apples, oranges, and almonds. American machinery was arriving, and smithies and carpenters' shops were going.

Of the genuineness of the Jewish settlement there can be no doubt. Ten years of the work which I saw will increase the wealth of Palestine a hundredfold.

But the immigration is challenged, and already there have been three serious disturbances between Arabs and Jews—two in Jerusalem and one at Jaffa. Critical situations have arisen elsewhere, and certain Arab leaders tell us plainly that unless we change our policy they will provide more trouble for us. If the Balfour declaration of a Jewish national home is not only crude in its form but impossible in its intention, we must bow to the inevitable and drop it ; but we must be quite certain of our ground before we come to any such conclusion.

In its most elementary, though very incomplete, form, the claim of the anti-Jewish Arab leaders is one for self-determination. From the point of view of present population, Palestine is an Arab state, out of 700,000 people, 70,000 alone being Jews. "We have been here for centuries," argue the Arabs, "and this land we claim as ours. We should have power to prevent any immigration that threatens to swamp us." Two considerations, however, deprive this claim of complete validity. The first is that Palestine cannot be divested of its traditions, which to this day remain vital political considerations. Palestine and the Jew can never be separated. On the one hand, nothing can justify a forcible dispossession of the Arab, or a setting aside of his political and economic rights in the country ; on the other hand, the Jew has a right to admission not only as an individual immigrant, but as part of "a return" of a dispersed people. This calls for Government regulation and control, because the incoming stream must be so ordered that it does not result in revolutionary civil commotion on the one hand, or in a super-

fluity of poverty-stricken people who cannot be absorbed on the other. This is the policy which Sir Herbert Samuel is pursuing with great wisdom and restraint.

The other consideration is that the Arab population do not and cannot use or develop the resources of Palestine. This is not disputed by anyone who knows the country. The total population of Palestine to-day, Sir George Adam Smith has pointed out, is less than was that of Galilee in the time of Christ. Official reports state that "the country is now undeveloped and under-populated"; "large cultivable areas are left untilled"; of the 12,000 square miles fit for cultivation, less than 4,000 are cultivated, and so on. What is cultivated is badly worked. "The area of land now cultivated could yield a far greater product"; "there are no forests"; "the Jordan and Yarmuk offer an abundance of water power, but it is unused." Already Jewish immigration is changing that. To the older Jewish settlements and agricultural schools are owing to a great extent both the Jaffa orange trade and the culture of vines; to the newer, agricultural machinery, afforestation, the beginnings of scientific manuring, the development of schemes of irrigation and of agricultural co-operation. Palestine not only offers room for hundreds of thousands of Jews, it loudly cries out for more labour and more skill.

Why then, apart from the general Moslem unrest, is there friction between Jew and Arab? Much of it is propaganda. Every foolish statement made by Jews is passed from lip to lip and is amplified in the passing. Thus, it is whispered, for instance, that the Jews intend to dispossess the Arabs of land, refuse to allow them to work, steal the Mosque of Omar. Bodies like the Islamic Patriotic Society of Haifa and the Palestine Club of Tiberias do their best to combat the mischief. But the Jewish cultivator and workman are the best conciliators. They cannot allow Palestine to be divided into two working-class nations, one with a substantially lower standard of life than the other. So the Jewish worker is helping the Arab to raise his standards. It is a stiff job, but in labour disputes the Arab workman has already begun to back the Jew. The evidence seems quite convincing that economic contacts are bringing the races into harmony. But that harmony seems to the Arab leaders to be an offence. Arab workmen interested in Trade Unionism, Arab cultivators seeking relief from corrupt and exploiting landowners—what is that but Bolshevism?

To say that the inspiration of the Moslem-Christian leaders is purely economic would be to miss much of the truth; to be blind



to the great influence of economic interests on the minds of the Arab leaders is to miss an essential part of the truth.

In fact, in studying Zionism in Palestine, I found changes with which I was familiar producing reactions with which I was equally familiar. The land of Palestine is held by large owners, and the same class has concentrated in its hands the ownership of towns, the employment of labour, and trade. More than that, it has ruled, collected taxes, led an obedient people. All this is threatened. Palestinian social economics has had its foundations removed by the ending of the Turkish occupation. Those whose interests are wrapped up in the passing order would, therefore, Zionism, or no Zionism, object to British tutelage. The "Moslem-Christian" deputations that come to state the case against the Jews, always, at some point, attack the British Government even more than the Jews. They rally the Arabs in their own sectional self-defence rather than in that of the Arab people or of Moslemism. The winds of Europe are blowing in upon them and they cannot stand the cutting blast. They see the coming shadow of a cultivator protected in his labour and property, they see the end of unjust exactions, they see their power vanishing, and they are fighting for their lives. Who can blame them? Their unhappiness and its consequences are incidents in the transition through which Palestine is passing. But we must be careful lest they do identify Moslemism with themselves and get us into a position from which we shall appear not only as the antagonists of economic antiquity and wrong, but of the Moslem world. We must not hesitate to speak over their heads to the Arab population and bind it to us by the justice of our administration. We must use the lips of whisperers as well as they.

There is also an awkward economic problem for the Jews. They come to Palestine with standards of living which we should call low, but which are high indeed compared with Arab ones. The Jewish workman in the rougher kinds of work is more expensive than the Arab workman, and, in the present undeveloped state of Palestine, technical skill has no chance of competing with low-paid labour. I found the Jewish workmen willing to work any number of hours, and great sections of them, like the numerous Labour Corps, draw no pay except what is necessary for bare subsistence. And yet, a contractor employing Arabs can undercut one employing Jews. There have been cases where on Jewish contracts, Jewish workmen, solely for these economic reasons, have asked for exclusive employment, and that has been used against them. How much trouble has the same problem given us here, bringing now men and women, now skilled and unskilled, into feud. The Socialist and Labour



Party has, however, made an official pronouncement deprecating any antagonism against Arab workmen, and declaring that all public work undertaken by Labour co-operative bodies should be carried out by Arabs and Jews, the Arabs being organised into co-operative groups sharing in the management of the work and enjoying Jewish standards of employment. For the moment all that is required is patience and careful handling, and at every conference with Labour leaders I found them fully aware of the urgency of a settlement, and none of them showed a trace of racial exclusiveness. In any event as Palestine develops, as industrial undertakings become more common and the land absorbs the people now working on the roads, the points of conflict will diminish, and the industrial *rapprochement* which has begun will extend. Political and economic common interests will tend to bring Jew and Arab together.

The Arab leaders, like their kith and kin over here, hurl the epithet "Bolshevist" at the heads of the immigrants. When Russia was like the glow of a dawn in the East, there were Bolsheviks in Palestine as there were everywhere. I looked for the remnants; I called for them in conversation with labour deputations and at the tables of land settlements, and they were not to be found. Rather, I found an impatience with politics, with Socialism, with methods like the Russian. They were regarded as being pretentious and superficial. The feeling seemed to be that change had to come from definite work done on a narrow field and amplified by co-operation. To seize great States was only to pull them about one's ears. The Bolshevik was like Samson rather than David. So they were content to plant Palestine and to form communities there. They believed that the land should be held in public trust (but there was as much Leviticus as Karl Marx in that); they believed that co-operative societies of workmen should wherever possible conduct industry and find the necessary capital; the majority of the newer communities were communal in the sense that the whole team laboured together and, on equality as consumers, enjoyed the results of their work together. The doctor and the dentist at Nuris, equally with the Galician peasant who works in the fields with them, but who is useless in dealing with aches and illnesses, draw what they want for food, tobacco, and clothing from the common stores, and that is their reward; elsewhere wages are paid, all getting alike; elsewhere there is individual cultivation. Whoever studies the conditions under which Palestine has to be reclaimed (particularly if it be assumed that the work has to be done quickly) must see how only by enlisting the hearts of men can the miracle be performed, and

that the communist (not Bolshevik) Nuris does that far better than the wage-paying, individualistic colonies. Of course the problem of Nuris will come when the vines, the orange trees, and the olives bear their fruit. Will the single-minded enthusiasm survive the gathering in of these fruits? Who will dogmatise on that? I asked every community I visited what would happen when they had to exchange their surplus products, when, in a few years, their vineyards and groves and forests and reclaimed fields would really begin to pay in the sense of yielding accumulations, and their reply was that co-operation would advance with their progress, and that the artistic and intellectual needs of the communities would for a long time absorb all surpluses. I do not know. They are very practical men, and as time goes on and experience is gained, they will make what modifications are necessary in their village arrangements. But for the time being, their method of communal labour, inspired very largely as the work of Nehemiah's followers building the walls of Jerusalem was inspired, is the most effective, the most economical, and the safest that could be devised for the future economic freedom of the country, and that praise is due to it even if one is quite convinced that it is only of temporary value.

There are to be many difficulties in the way of developing Palestine until it yields the fruits and bears the population which it can easily do; there will be some failures and disappointments in Zionist schemes; there will be friction in adjusting Arab and Jew into one community. But these are matters of detail. A policy which, whilst keeping Palestine open to a Jewish "return," not only protects an Arab in his rights but sees that he shares amply in the increased prosperity of the country, is certainly not doomed to failure.

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## VII—PALESTINE AND THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY.\*

MY visit to Palestine has been too short to admit of my entering into a minute examination of the work done by the organised workers in this country, nor have I been able to go in detail into the problems exercising their minds. All that I have seen, however, has been of the greatest interest to me, and on my return to London I think I shall be able to tell my friends in the Independent Labour Party and the Labour Party what the aims of the Palestinian workers and Socialists are.

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\* Translation of an interview which appeared on March 3rd, 1922, in the *Kuntres*, Jaffa, organ of the Socialist Party of Palestine, "Ahduth-Haavodah."

I hope that in future we shall get to know one another more and more intimately, and I can at any rate assure my Palestinian comrades that I shall follow the future developments of the country with the greatest interest.

The recent by-elections in Great Britain have shown that after the next General Election (which cannot be delayed for long), the number of Labour and Socialist candidates returned will be so large that, even though they may not constitute an absolute majority in the House of Commons, the Government will not be able to govern without taking them into account. Their criticisms and views will have so strong a bearing on the issue of debates and divisions that a great share of influence in the shaping of the national policy will be assigned to them. There are people, merely ignorant, who, despite the ado they make of their patriotism and of the preservation of national honour, really have not the slightest notion either of patriotism or of national honour. These people have an idea that in the event of a predominance of the Labour Party in the House of Commons, men having very little understanding of, and even less interest in, world problems, would be at the head of Government. Just the opposite would be true. The Labour Party has more international connections than any other party, and these connections are sounder than those of the old ruling classes. For the first time in the history of the world a British Labour Government would be able to unite and consolidate the international working classes, and would be in a position to pursue an open world-policy, for it would be based on the interests of the whole community, and not on the interests of any single class; on a basis of democratic understanding, and not on any secret agreement between rulers. Such a Labour policy would be bound to be honest, because the stages of its development would be under constant public control.

I have been strongly impressed by a statement I have repeatedly heard during my stay in Palestine: that is, that the people who come here are "fed up" with aggressive slogans and wordy criticism on economic and political deficiencies, such as are the stock-in-trade of Communism in Europe, and that they want to do constructive work. This is the spirit which prevails also among the British workers. We were never carried away by the empty words of those who thought it possible to imitate the Russian Revolution, without taking into account the conditions peculiar to Russia. Moreover, we contended that every sound work of reconstruction must have due regard to existing economic conditions, and that, should the Soviet Government hold until the Revolution will have passed into the stage of construction, Lenin and his friends would be compelled to withdraw from their



original position and would have to begin all over again from exactly the same point from which we ourselves would have to begin. As a matter of fact, events have confirmed what we foresaw, and the political communist movement has utterly collapsed in our country, degenerating into a mere adjunct of the bourgeois reaction.

Placed as we are, we cannot begin with the creation of an agricultural settlement, but if England were in a similar position to Palestine, we should also have to follow the same course. As it is, we shall have to achieve the change by propagating our ideas and methods, by persuading democracy that our way is the right one, and by seizing political power in a constitutional way. Maybe it is a slow method, nevertheless it is the only one which leads to stable results.

I know the Labour Party will be anxious to hear what I have seen. I am going back in order to take part in a great spring electioneering campaign in South Wales and other places, and shall do my best to impart to my audiences my impressions of Palestine, not only with regard to the Jewish workers, but also with regard to the Arab workers.

I am afraid that at present mischief is being done in my country with regard to Palestine. Certain circles are striving to sow discord between Jews and Arabs. I shall relate all I have seen and heard on both sides, and will give expression to the hope which I carry away with me, that both among the Jews and the Arabs there are influential circles which will strive to achieve unity and common action.

If the Labour Party can be of any help to you in this respect, if it can in any way assist those officials who, in the face of great difficulties, are working for this end, it will gladly do so.

It is my belief, founded on my impressions in Palestine, that the success of Palestine depends upon the development of Palestinian life and on the participation in this great work both of Jews and Arabs.

I shall also tell of the work I saw on the roads and in the agricultural co-operative settlements. With this work you are laying a solid foundation for national economy and prosperity. To-day you are being confronted by great obstacles ; to-morrow, I hope, you will reap in joy what you have sown in tears. If only you succeed in guarding your land against corruptive capitalism, you will not only achieve your own happiness, but will have set an example to the whole world. Should it be my lot to come to your country again, I shall hope to find your vineyards and fields flourishing and you reaping the fruits of your labour in peace and happiness, for you deserve to prosper.

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