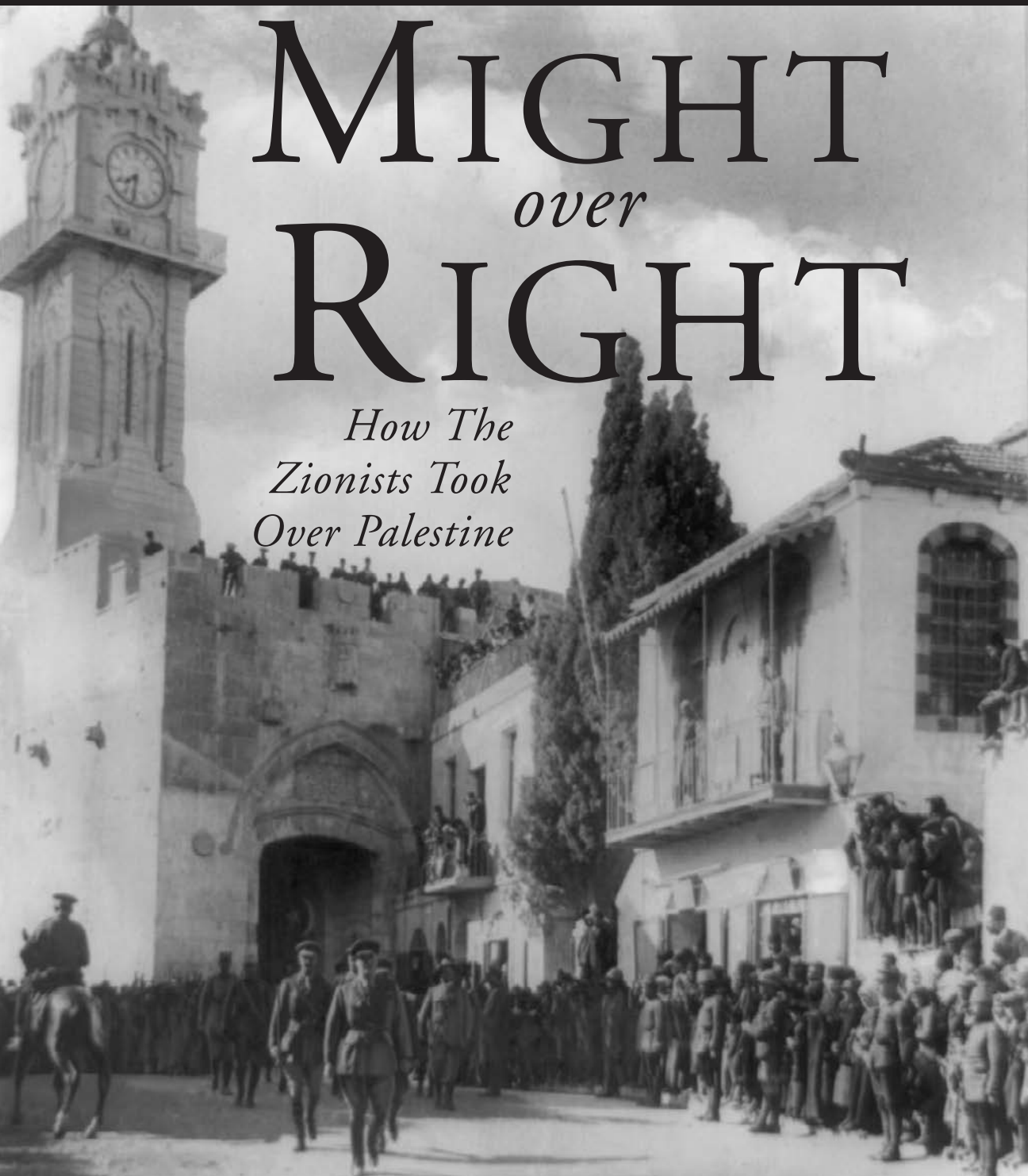


ADEL SAFTY

MIGHT *over* RIGHT

*How The
Zionists Took
Over Palestine*



*“Adel Safty’s meticulous and careful study reveals
a shameful record of betrayal and tragedy.”*

NOAM CHOMSKY

MIGHT *over* RIGHT

*How The
Zionists Took
Over Palestine*

ADEL SAFTY

Garnet
PUBLISHING

MIGHT OVER RIGHT
How the Zionists Took Over Palestine

Published by
Garnet Publishing
8 Southern Court
South Street
Reading
RG1 4QS
UK

www.garnetpublishing.co.uk

Copyright © Adel Safty 2009

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote brief passages in a review.

First Edition

ISBN-13: 978-1-85964-212-2

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Typeset by Samantha Barden.
Jacket design by David Rose.

Cover illustration used courtesy of Library of Congress,
Prints and Photographs Division, LC-US262-93094.

Printed by Biddles, UK.

Contents

Foreword	v
Introduction	ix
1 Formation of the Zionist Plan, 1864–1917	1
2 The Balfour Declaration and the Paris Peace Conference, 1917–1919	21
3 Lead up to the British Mandate, 1919–1921	49
4 The Zionists Strengthen Their Position, 1921	71
5 Zionism and the Nazis	89
6 Clashes and Enquiries, 1921–31	95
7 Arab Resistance and the Peel Commission Report, 1936–1937	111
8 The Slide to War and the Strengthening of Zionist Power, 1937–1939	125
9 The Balance of Power in Palestine Shifts, 1939–1945	133
10 The Decline of the British Empire and the Rise of American Hegemony	145
11 The Turning Point: Truman Endorses Partition, 1947	157
12 The Use of Force and Displacement of the Arabs from Palestine	175
13 Unsuccessful Arab Intervention, the Failure of the UN and Zionist Expansionism	199

14	Palestine Conquered and Transformed: Myths and Realities	221
15	The Arab–Israeli Conflict 1956–2000	237
16	The Arab–Israeli Conflict from 2001	257
	Epilogue	285
	Index	295

Foreword

Lord Gilmour of Craigmiller

In 1896, Theodor Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism, claimed that as far as Europe was concerned the Zionists in Palestine would “constitute . . . part of the rampart against Asia, we would occupy the outposts of civilization, stemming the tide of barbarism”. Some early British Zionists, such as Arthur Balfour, doubtless believed him, and because of the unceasing barrage of Israeli propaganda in the US media many Americans still cling to this view.

In his crisp and eloquent book, *Might Over Right*, Adel Safty puts the record straight. With scholarly care he vividly demonstrates how the Zionists’ inexorable annexation of Palestine at the expense of its rightful inhabitants has rather led them to behave like an outpost of ‘barbarism’, relentlessly destroying an almost defenceless Palestinian ‘civilization’. For the last hundred years or so the Palestinians have almost invariably had ‘right’ on their side, yet the Zionists or Israelis have always had ‘might’ on theirs. And of course ‘might’ has easily won the unequal struggle.

From 1917 until the period after the Second World War, Zionist ‘might’ was largely supplied by Britain. Since then it has come from the Israelis themselves and from their American sponsors. We in Britain have become so accustomed to the strength of the pro-Israeli lobbies in Washington and to the outrageous bias of successive American administrations in favour of Israel – at the UN in the past 30 years the United States has cast 34 vetoes in favour of Israel, many of them defying international law, as well as supplying Israel with cascades of military weapons and billions of dollars – that it is salutary to be reminded by Mr Safty that Britain played a similar if not so crudely partisan role for most of the 30 years after 1917.

Britain's Balfour Declaration in 1917 promised something to a third party which was not hers to give, that it is to say Palestine. Even then this third party had every intention of displacing the existing inhabitants, and the Declaration was and is inexcusable. This is not just hindsight. Men like Lord Curzon realized at the time that Balfour's folly would have disastrous consequences. And there was no doubt even then about the Zionist objective. When asked at the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919 to spell out the true aim of his movement, the supposedly moderate Zionist, Chaim Weizmann, said that it was to make "Palestine as Jewish as England is English". With the population of Palestine then being less than 10% Jewish, that could only mean removing most of the other 90% at some point.

Balfour was well aware that the Jews were in a small minority in Palestine. "The weak point of our position", he told the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, "is that in the case of Palestine we deliberately and rightly decline to accept the principle of self-determination". A few months later he cynically confessed that "so far as Palestine is concerned the Powers have made no statement of fact which is not admittedly wrong, and no declaration of policy which at least in the letter they have not always intended to violate". As a Foreign Office official justly commented, "Palestine is to go to the Zionists irrespective of the wishes of the great bulk of the population . . . The idea that [this] will entail bloodshed and military repression never seems to have occurred to [Balfour]".

The Palestinians did eventually revolt, as they were bound to do when they saw that the Zionists intended to establish in Palestine a foreign state which would oppress its Arab subjects and/or expel them. But the British bloodily trampled down the Arab rebels, evidently not realizing that it was they themselves who had caused the inevitable rebellion. The Zionist leader knew better. David Ben-Gurion, later Israel's first and greatest Prime Minister, said that "were he an Arab . . . he would also rebel, with even greater intensity, and with greater bitterness and despair". Unfortunately, that understanding did not influence his subsequent conduct.

Zionism has never been a humanitarian movement; it has always been an aggressively nationalist one. During the pre-war Nazi persecution of the Jews, the British government proposed that thousands of Jewish-German children be admitted into Britain. Yet Ben-Gurion strongly opposed that humanitarian suggestion. He told his fellow Zionists that

if he knew that “it would be possible to save all the children in Germany by bringing them over to England, and only half of them by transporting them to Eretz Israel, then [he] would opt for the second alternative”. Zionist fanaticism thus led Ben-Gurion to a position worthy of King Herod.

A similar level of ruthless cynicism and absence of scruple was evident in the proposal by a Jewish terrorist group, the Stern Gang, (to which the future Israeli Prime Minister Itzhak Shamir prominently belonged) that there should be an alliance between Nazi Germany and a future Jewish state. Despite that flirtation, in 1943 Ben-Gurion opened what the pro-Israeli historian, Christopher Sykes, whom I was lucky enough to know, called “a new phase in Zionist propaganda: henceforth to be anti-Zionist was to be anti-Semitic; to disapprove of Jewish territorial nationalism was to be a Nazi”. However discreditable this position, it proved a potent propaganda tool and remains so, especially in the United States.

Israel is now strongly opposed to ‘terrorism’, stigmatizing as ‘terrorist’ even fully legitimate Palestinian acts of resistance against Israel’s brutal army of occupation. Nevertheless the state of Israel was of course itself created by terrorism – both against the British and the Palestinians. In April 1948 the Irgun, the terrorist organization led by Menachem Begin (who later became Prime Minister of Israel), committed a particularly appalling atrocity – the massacre of Deir Yassein. Not long afterwards a number of prominent Jewish Americans, including Albert Einstein, objected to Begin visiting the United States, saying that his political party, the ‘Freedom Party’, the predecessor of Ariel Sharon’s Likud Party, was “closely akin in its organization, methods, political philosophy, and social appeal to the Nazi and Fascist parties”.

The Arab world has always had so strong a case on the issue of Palestine that extraordinary incompetence and inefficiency has been required for the message not to get across, yet it has rarely done so, an abject and disastrous failure which is rightly criticized in this book. The complete master of his subject, Adel Safty graphically recounts how the Zionists achieved their aim of dispossessing and driving out most of the indigenous inhabitants of Palestine. Through his liberal use of telling quotations, Adel Safty enables the Zionists to condemn themselves out of their own mouths. He has produced a masterly and unanswerable indictment of Zionist and Israeli policies past and present.

Introduction

This book is about one of the most incredible stories in 20th-century international relations; it is about how a group of people with nothing more at their disposal than a grand design, managed, in less than 50 years, to bring about the implementation of that design, and in the process to profoundly affect the course of international relations and fundamentally transform the history of the Middle East.

The grand design was as incredibly ambitious as it was astonishingly daring, for it involved nothing less than the taking over of a whole country and the displacement of its people. The architects of this plan were the leaders of the Zionist movement and their grand design was to take over Palestine.

At the end of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century, political Zionism faced two major challenges: firstly how to rally the support of the Western Powers and their influential Jewish communities for the Jewish nationalist goal of establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine, Argentina or Cyprus. Secondly, how to colonize and turn a country like Palestine, with an overwhelming Muslim majority, into a Jewish State?

The success of the Zionists in achieving both goals was largely due to the efforts of the Zionist leaders, who preached the use of deception and force. This was cogently illustrated in the Zionists' basic strategic approach to Palestine, succinctly put by the leader of the Zionist movement Theodor Herzl: "Might takes precedence over right."

Zionism may have many achievements to its credit in the eyes of nationalist Jews, though none, I daresay, could match the successful implementation of the design to take over Palestine. This book does not, however, seek to tell the story of Zionism's achievements. Zionist historians and other writers have told that side of the story countless times.

This book tells the other side of the story, which has gone largely unreported for the first 70 years or so of the conflict: the story of how, in

implementing their grand design to forcibly take over Palestine, the Zionists knew that their strategy was bound to inflict gross injustices on the ill-prepared people of Palestine. The Zionists also knew, and many admitted as much then as they still admit now, that the Palestinians were innocent bystanders who had no role in the persecution of, and discrimination against, the Jews in Europe, which led to the birth of Jewish nationalism and Zionist militancy.

As Israeli Professor Beit-Hallahmi put it: “It was easy to make the Palestinians pay for 2,000 years of persecution. The Palestinians, who have felt the enormous power of this vengeance, were not the historical oppressors of the Jews. They did not put Jews into ghettos and did not force them to wear yellow stars. They did not plan holocausts. But they had one fault. They were weak and defenceless in the face of real military might, so they were the ideal victims for an abstract revenge.”¹

The strategy for taking over Palestine was as simple as it was daring: deception, alliance with imperial powers, systematic propaganda to sustain such alliances and naked force.

Deception was used to convince the British imperial leaders that Zionism was widely supported by European Jews when it was not. Deception was used to claim that Palestine was a land without a people when it was not. Deception was used to secure the support of Great Britain by claiming that all the Zionists wanted was a home in Palestine, a haven from persecution, when in fact they wanted much more. Deception was used to convince the Allied Powers, meeting after the end of World War I at the Peace Conference in Paris, that all that the Zionists wanted was to contribute to the economic development of Palestine, and that they had no intention of displacing Palestine’s original inhabitants. Deception was used to argue successfully that a historic connection with a country could give rise to political rights, when in fact such an argument had no basis of validity. And, after the successful implementation of the Zionist project of establishing a Jewish state, deception was used to successfully convince the world that the Palestinians had ‘left’ their homes and land, when in fact the Palestinian exodus was caused by terror, massacres, and expulsion. Thereafter, deception was used to systematically blame the victim.

Deception alone, of course, would not have been enough. Great Britain had its own imperial interests (proximity to the Suez Canal, protecting the land route to India, and foiling the imperial ambitions

of rival France), which it thought could be served by sponsoring the Zionist project in Palestine.

Sponsoring the immigration of European Jews to Palestine with the ostensible goal of establishing a Jewish home in Palestine could only be implemented by force, since the Palestinian Arabs, about 93% of the population of Palestine at the time of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, were not going to acquiesce to the colonization of their country by an alien culture. Sir John Bagot Glubb recognized that the use of force was inherent in London's decision to sponsor the Zionist project in Palestine: "To impose on the Arab majority of Palestine a policy so extremely distasteful to them required coercion by military force. The British Army found itself unwillingly obliged to force on the people of Palestine a policy bitterly opposed by the majority of the people. Military coercion of a civilian population has always been extremely distasteful to the people of Britain. It was one of the many ironies of the Palestine muddle that the Jews, who seemed in Europe to be an oppressed minority, arrived in Palestine in the guise of European colonizers. Many of the parties, which, in Europe and America have been the loudest to denounce European 'imperialism', yet support the forcible colonization of Palestine by military force."²

The first Zionist leaders were also skilful politicians. Chaim Weizmann managed to convince Western leaders that Zionism was an extension of European imperialism. He was successful in galvanizing the support of reluctant but influential Jews in the West for the cause of Zionism. The support of influential Jews proved crucial in bringing political pressure to bear on British leaders every time they were tempted to follow the conclusions and recommendations of their own commissions of inquiry that looked into the causes of the increasingly violent and frequent Palestinian clashes with the conquering Zionist colonizers. Pressure by influential Jewish organizations in America was instrumental in bringing the Truman administration around to supporting the UN recommendation to partition Palestine, and making sure that it was not swayed by the proposal to place Palestine under a UN trusteeship. Eventually, the major Zionist organizations in Western Europe and the United States would come to exercise a remarkable degree of influence in the setting of the political agenda, especially in the United States, in all matters concerning the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and, later, the Arab–Israeli conflict.

Thus, deception, propaganda, alliance with imperial powers, and eventually naked force, were the hallmarks of the Zionist strategy for the taking over of Palestine. It was a daring strategy worthy of Niccolo Machiavelli, the 15th-century Florentine master. The Zionist strategy was, in fact, more remarkable and astonishing than Machiavelli's own advice, for Machiavelli counselled rulers to resort to the use of brutalities, deception, crime and naked force in order to obtain and safeguard power, and protect the interests of the state. But when the Zionists started their daring odyssey they had neither power nor a state. They had just an idea: the idea that anti-Semitism was endemic in Europe, as the 1894 Alfred Dreyfus trial in France had illustrated, and that no reforms, even in the liberal democracies of the West, could eradicate it. Therefore, the Zionist leaders argued, only the establishment of a Jewish state could solve this intractable problem.

The idea of Jewish nationalism was novel because historically nationalism in Europe was based not on religious but rather on ethnic national identification, usually within an already defined territorial base. Judaism on the other hand was not an ethnic identity but a religion; there was no such a thing as a Jewish nationality; the Jews were nationals of the countries where they lived. In addition, there was no particular group of nationalist Jews living within a defined territory that collectively rebelled against the ruling regime in that territory and demanded independence. Certainly the indigenous Jews of Palestine did not revolt and demand special political rights; on the contrary, many in fact opposed Zionism and its basic philosophy, arguing that the Zionist project to establish Israel by force was morally untenable because Israel would be established only with the return of the Messiah, not by the sword of mortals like the Zionist colonizers.

The nationalism of the Zionists was thus unique in that, lacking a homogenous population base anywhere and a territorially defined base from which to agitate and struggle for the fulfilment of its nationalist aspirations, it required a homogenous population and a territory. The Zionists wanted to colonize an existing country, which they could turn into a Jewish state with a homogenous Jewish population. They selected Argentina, the Egyptian Sinai, Cyprus or Palestine as the venue for their daring colonial venture, but the British offered them only Uganda. Eventually, the Zionists insisted on Palestine because of its spiritual

appeal to the Jews who were not yet converted to the nationalist message of the Zionists.

Zionism presented itself as both a nationalist movement demanding political rights for its members, and an imperial colonizing movement, one of the many contradictions and complexities inherent in the Zionist project. Whereas nationalist movements in the 19th and 20th centuries were essentially founded on the struggle of a group of people living together in a defined territory who shared history, language and culture and wanted to throw off the yoke of imperialist control over national destiny, the Zionist movement decided to be both nationalist and imperialist.

The Zionists were not only unusual nationalists they were also unique imperialists. Unlike most imperialists, the Zionists were not interested in discharging the ‘White Man’s burden’ of civilizing the savage in the way that some British imperialists had perceived and rationalized their colonial policies. Nor were they in pursuit of *une certaine idée de la nation* to create overseas territories that became an extension of the glorious metropolis, as many French imperialists had seen their colonial enterprise.

Maxime Rodinson has compared the Zionist movement to the French colonial settler movement in Algeria in the 19th and 20th centuries. A marked difference, however, is that the French settlers superimposed their colonial structures and their colonists over the existing population of Algeria whom they actively sought to mould in the French image, linguistically and culturally. The Zionists wanted neither to civilize nor to integrate the colonized people. They wanted to completely displace them and simply take over their country. The Zionists were the ultimate exclusivists. They were not the avant-gardes of a proselytizing religion, and they rejected any suggestion of bi-national co-existence with the Palestinian Arabs in Palestine. They were only interested, as they repeatedly made it clear, in making Palestine “as Jewish as England is English”.

The Zionists were also unusual democrats in that while they constituted themselves as a democratic polity, the Zionist movement contained, and eventually came to be dominated by, totalitarian social-nationalist thoughts. This at once explains the contradiction of Israel being a democratic state that is not the state of all of its citizens, but the state of an exclusive group of people belonging to a specific religious faith no matter where they may be around the world. It also explains the

extremist views, which were originally at the margin of the Zionist movement, but which eventually came to dominate the Zionist and the Israeli body politic. While democratic imperial powers were able to accept the consequences of a changed balance of power, and of the emergence of new normative values in international relations and international law such as equality of peoples and the principle of self-determination, the Zionist movement and the Israeli body politic were unable to adapt. This was a result, in large measure, of the dominance of totalitarian thought, at least vis-à-vis the Palestinian people.

Vladimir Jabotinsky and his disciples in the new revisionist movement made no secret of their affinity for fascist and totalitarian thought. Both the revisionist Zionists and the German Zionists were anxious to conclude collaboration agreements with Hitler's Germany. The revisionist Zionists came to dominate Israeli politics from 1977 onwards. Menachem Begin, who took pride in the Deir Yassein massacre,³ became Prime Minister. Itzhak Shamir, the leader of the Stern Gang, a would-be ally of Hitler and the plotter of two famous murders, Lord Moyne the British Resident Minister in Egypt on 6 November 1944, and Count Folk Bernadotte, the UN mediator, on 17 September 1948, eventually became Prime Minister of Israel.⁴ Ariel Sharon, who led Israeli troops in the Qibya massacre of 1953, and was found indirectly responsible by an Israeli commission of inquiry for the Sabra and Shatilla massacre in Beirut in 1982, was appointed to various cabinet posts before becoming Prime Minister in 2001. He then wreaked havoc on the Palestinian people, and on the same Palestinian leadership that had cooperated with previous Israeli Labour and Likud governments.

Lenni Brenner concluded his seminal study, *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators*, by pointing out: "When [Israeli Prime Minister Menachem] Begin appointed Shamir and honoured Stern by having postage stamps issued which bear his portrait, he did it with full knowledge of their past. There can be no better proof than this that the heritage of Zionist collusion with the Fascists, and the Nazis, and the philosophies underlying it, carries through to contemporary Israel."⁵

This unique mixture of a movement democratically organized, reflecting both liberal and totalitarian thoughts, presenting itself as both nationalist and imperialist, and seeking nothing less than the total displacement of a people, necessarily required a strategy of deception, alliance with imperial powers and sheer force to displace the unwanted

population of the colonized country. If the goal were displacement and replacement of a whole people in order to take over their country, the tactics could not have been otherwise. This explains why those Zionist leaders who were interested in promoting the humanitarian ideas of Judaism, or in championing co-existence with the original inhabitants of Palestine, were pushed aside as militant Zionist leaders came to dominate the Zionist movement in Palestine, and eventually implement the strategy of deception and force. And as soon as they had built up enough strength in Palestine under the protection of their imperial sponsor Great Britain, they announced that they wanted not a Jewish state *in* Palestine, but to turn *all of Palestine* into a Jewish state.

The Zionists themselves recognized that the forcible taking over of the country was inherent in their colonizing enterprise. Theodor Herzl preached that “might takes precedence over right”. Vladimir Jabotinsky, one of the right-wing Zionist leaders, wrote in 1923: “Zionism is a colonizing adventure and therefore it stands or falls by the question of armed force. It is important to build, it is important to speak Hebrew, but, unfortunately, it is even more important to be able to shoot – or else I am through with playing at colonization.”⁶

Many Zionist leaders, especially but not exclusively the so-called revisionist Zionists who came to dominate Israeli politics from the late 1970s on, understood and frankly admitted that the Zionist goal in Palestine necessitated a policy of conquest, displacement and, to quote from the 1979 confessions of an Israeli soldier, a strategy of terror and the occasional massacre as “a method of expulsion and extermination”.⁷

The April 1948 Deir Yassein massacre may have become engraved in the collective psyche of the Palestinian people as a tragic symbol of their victimization, but it was also a dramatic illustration of the Zionist strategy. As one Israeli writer put it: “Deir Yassin demonstrated the full scope of Zionist tactics. After the mass murder became known, the Jewish leadership blamed the Arabs. David Ben-Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel, announced that rogue Arab gangs perpetrated it. When this version of events collapsed, the Jewish leaders began the damage control procedures. They sent an apology to Emir Abdullah and Ben-Gurion publicly distanced himself and his government from the bloody massacre, saying it stained the name of every honest Jew and that it was the work of dissident terrorists. His public relations techniques remain a source of pride for the good-hearted pro-Zionist ‘liberals’ abroad.

“What a horrible, dreadful story”, a humanist Jew told an Israeli writer when he drove him by the remaining houses of Deir Yassin, and then he added: “But Ben-Gurion condemned the terrorists, and they were duly punished.” “Yes”, he responded, “they were duly punished and promoted to the highest government posts.”⁸

Some would say that there is nothing particularly unusual about the use of force to establish a new country. The modern international relations system, since its inception with the Westphalia Treaty in 1648, is replete with examples of the use of force, of old countries disappearing and new ones coming into existence, of border changes, population movements, and dispossession and sufferings. The Goths, Vandals and Mongols have changed the face of Europe, as the Scandinavians and the Normans did that of Britain, not to mention the forcible colonization of America and the subsequent fate of its indigenous people.

There is, of course, truth in that argument. However, the Zionist conquest of Palestine is different in at least three respects. Firstly, although it has managed to dispossess, displace and disperse the original inhabitants of Palestine, it has neither integrated them into the conquering culture, nor completely eliminated them as contenders for, and inhabitants of, the same country. In fact, one of the ironies of the Zionist conquest of Palestine, and its inevitable clash and suppression of its people, was that it stirred the Palestinian Arabs into developing a distinct sense of identity and nationalism, borne of years of struggle, resistance and suffering, thus ensuring that they would not melt into the sea of surrounding Arab culture as the Zionists had originally hoped.

Secondly, the Zionist strategy of deception was so successful that at first it managed to eliminate the Palestinian Arabs from most narratives about Palestine. At a latter stage, when such elimination of the ‘Other’ was no longer possible, the Zionists managed to successfully secure the uncritical support of opinion-makers and decision-makers in Western capitals for their necessarily distorted account of history. The result was that in the West, especially in the United States, many in the media, academia and in the corridors of power, came to blame the victim. However, this strategy, successful and effective as it may have been, is under attack. It is being challenged by the growing revelations made by Israeli historians and writers about the reality of Zionist victimization of the Palestinian people, and by the growing dissent both inside Israel and among the traditional supporters of Israel as to the viability, and

increasingly the morality, of continued uncritical support for the strategy of ‘might takes precedence over right’.

Thirdly, the realization of the Zionist design of establishing a Jewish state was not the end of the Zionist project. The Zionists originally wanted a Jewish state in Palestine and the establishment of Israel in 1948 and the subsequent conquest of additional land brought about two-thirds of Palestine under Zionist control. But within thirty years, the Zionists had made their true intentions known. They now wanted all of Palestine to become a Jewish state; the conclusion is that for many Zionist leaders the establishment of Israel did not mean the end of the conquest. The Zionist project was unfinished and yet to be completed. Indeed, the Zionists’ strategy of ‘might takes precedence over right’, successful in the first half of the 20th century, continued to be used into the 21st century, despite greater awareness of the issues at stake and growing condemnation from many quarters around the world.

In all three respects, the Zionist project is different from the successful use of force in history that resulted in the total subjugation of a people, or the complete disappearance of countries, or the productions of irrevocable realities recognized by the international community. Because of this, Zionism is more closely akin to the imperialist ventures that succeeded in imposing the will of the imperial power but were increasingly challenged until the imperial adventure came to an end. The Zionists imposed their colonial will on Palestine and secured recognition for the realities they created by force when they established Israel and conquered additional lands in 1948–49. But the Israeli leaders’ continued commitment to might taking precedence over right in order to complete the taking over of all of Palestine is now widely viewed as expansionist, aggressive and unlikely to prevail.

Expansionism was inherent in the unfinished Zionist project to take over all of Palestine. Zionist leaders speak among themselves with more candour and admit realities they would not otherwise admit to in public pronouncements. For instance, even after the signing of an armistice with Egypt in 1949, Zionist leaders discussed plans for attacking the West Bank and evicting the Arab population in order to make all of Palestine a Jewish state. In a particularly revealing incident, military commander Yigal Allon submitted a proposal to Ben-Gurion calling for a military attack on the West Bank: “We shall easily find the reasons or, to be more accurate, the pretexts, to justify our offensive, as we did up to now.”⁹

Expansionism was also behind the lightning Israeli attack against Arab countries in June 1967. This war offers another cogent illustration of the effectiveness of the Zionist strategy of deception and force. Perhaps the biggest Zionist fabrication, after that about the Palestinian exodus, is that concerning responsibility for the 1967 war. Pro-Israeli media and academic accounts of the war unabashedly accept the Israeli version that Israel was threatened with extinction by warmongering Arab neighbours and had to launch a preventative attack against them. It is remarkable that this account still endures despite frank admissions by Israeli leaders to the contrary. Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin frankly admitted: "The Egyptian army concentration in the Sinai does not prove that Nasser was really about to attack us. We must be honest with ourselves. We decided to attack him."¹⁰ A group of Israeli generals, including Haim Bar-Lev and Mattityahu Peled, were equally candid in admitting that the claim of an imminent threat to Israel's existence was a fabrication for propaganda purposes to facilitate the implementation of expansionist designs: "All these stories about the danger of extermination had been invented word by word and were a *posteriori* justification for the annexation of new Arab territories."¹¹

The pursuit by Israeli leaders of a military solution to the Palestine conflict was illustrated by the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 in order to stamp out Palestinian nationalism once and for all and facilitate the subjugation, and 'transfer', of the Palestinians of the occupied territories. Expansionism is illustrated by the fact that since Israeli leaders signed the Oslo Agreement with the Palestinian leadership in 1993, they have doubled the number of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, continued the process of expropriation of land and actively pursued policies designed to ensure the political subjugation of the Palestinian people.

When Ariel Sharon became Prime Minister of Israel in 2001, he preferred a military solution to the gradual expansionism previous Israeli governments pursued under cover of the Oslo Agreement, an agreement which he denounced. The mindless violence he unleashed against the Palestinian towns and refugee camps, and the plan to discredit the Palestinian leadership and humiliate it had been prepared in advance. As Israeli writer Tanya Reinhart recently documented: "most of the military plans underlying Israel's actions [after the first Palestinian suicide bombing occurred inside Israel on November 2, 2000], had already been

conceived right at the start, in October 2000, including the destruction of the Palestinian infrastructure (the 'Field of Thorns' plan). The political strategies aimed at discrediting the late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and the Palestinian Authority were also ready right from the start. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's political circles prepared a manuscript known as the 'White Book', which announced that Arafat had never abandoned the 'option of violence'.¹² Israeli generals began speaking about the need to finish the job started in 1948.¹³

The story that this book tells is largely based on historical accounts and admissions made by Israeli leaders and writers. Yet despite the fact that most of these accounts are readily available in the West, they have yet to make serious cracks in the edifice of propaganda still dominant in the Western, and especially American, media and scholarship accounts of the Palestine conflict. This is a testimony to the effectiveness of the Zionist public relations efforts and their ability to suppress free debate of controversial issues that seem to be more readily debated and discussed in Israel than they are allowed to be in North America. It is my hope that this book, along with others like it, will help those readers anxious to clear the thick fog and have a better view and clearer understanding of the drama inherent in the dispossession and displacement of a whole people, and help bring an end to the morally outrageous strategy of blaming the victim.

Only then will it be possible to have the moral clarity and courage necessary to oppose the victimization of a whole people. "What is needed to give hope a chance", stated one Israeli writer in an impassioned appeal, "is for the people of the world to intervene and stop the Israeli military Junta, which does not even represent the Israeli majority . . . My biggest hope and plea is – save the Palestinians! Make 'Stop Israel!' a part of any struggle against the US war in Iraq. If the governments of the world will not do that, my hope is that the people of the world still can."¹⁴

In the end, violence begets violence, and a cycle of hatred and despair repeats itself. This vicious cycle in Palestine and Israel can only be broken by those intellectually honest voices of moral courage that are raised, increasingly in Israel and elsewhere, to condemn the continued occupation, dispossession and dehumanization of an entire people.

The story of how the Palestinians suffered gross injustices at the hands of the Zionist colonizers is only the first step in the process of

confronting the inescapable realities of the conflict. Moral courage is then required to move beyond intellectually admitting the injustices inflicted on a whole people, to recognizing that the Palestinian people are entitled by right, not as an act of charity on the part of the colonizing culture, to freedom and independence, and to reparations, to help restore their shattered society and wounded human dignity.

NOTES

- 1 Quoted in Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, *Original Sins* (Brooklyn, NY: Olive Branch Press, 1992), from *The Ethical Spectacle*, April 1995, <http://www.spectacle.org>.
- 2 John Bagot Glubb, *The Story of the Arab Legion* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1948, 1956), p. 229.
- 3 Lenni Brenner, *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators* (London: Croom Helm, 1983), p. 83. See also Mark Weber, 'Zionism and the Third Reich', *The Journal of Historical Review*, July–August 1993 (Vol. 13, No. 4), pp. 29–37 (http://www.ihr.org/jhr/v13/v13n4p29_Weber.html); Israel Shamir, 'Genocidal Depopulation: The Deir Yassin Massacre', *The Barnes Review* (http://www.barnesreview.org/html/genocidal_depopulation.html); and the letter to the *New York Times* from Jewish intellectuals including Albert Einstein, Hannah Arendt and Sidney Hook, on 4 December 1948.
- 4 Brenner, op. cit.; Akiva Eldar and Amnon Barzilay, 'Yitzhak Shamir: Man of Mystery', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Winter, 1984), pp. 166–99.
- 5 Lenni Brenner, op. cit., p. 269.
- 6 Quoted in *The Ethical Spectacle*, April 1995, <http://www.spectacle.org>.
- 7 Quoted in Livia Rokach, *Israel's Sacred Terrorism: A Study Based on Moshe Sharett's Personal Diary and Other Documents* (Belmont, MA: AAUG Press, 1986), 3rd ed., p. 5.
- 8 Israel Shamir, "April is the Cruellest of Months", published at <http://home.mindspring.com>, April 2, 2001.
- 9 Yeoham Cohen, *In the Light of Day and in Darkness* (Hebrew, Tel-Aviv, 1969), pp. 271–74 quoted in Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), p. 114.
- 10 *The New York Times*, August 21, 1982.
- 11 See Amnon Kapeliouk, "Israel était-il réellement menacé d'extermination?", *Le Monde*, June 3, 1972; and Amnon Kapeliouk, "Les occasions manquées du conflit du juin 1967", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, June 1992.
- 12 ZNet Interview with Tanya Reinhart, November 2002.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid.

1

Formation of the Zionist Plan, 1864–1917

The Emergence of Political Zionism

The Enlightenment of the 18th century and the triumph of liberal ideas in Europe presented European Jews with alternate paths for social and political development. It made possible total social integration in Europe, but it also made acceptable the possibility of separate nationalist fulfilment of political aspirations. The modernists among the Jews, particularly those of Western Europe, chose integration. However, continued pogroms and persecution of Jews in Eastern Europe encouraged some East-European Jewish leaders to reject integration in favour of the nationalist solution.

The intellectual ideals which made possible the transition from integrationism to the Zionist revolution were articulated by a number of Jewish thinkers in the second half of the 19th century. Moses Hess (1812–75), like Hegel before him, argued that history was a dialectal process and that the world was entering an age of maturity and reconciliation.

In his book *Rome and Jerusalem* (1862), he argued that nationalism was a natural historical growth and that although Jews may have become emancipated they would never be respected so long as they denied their origins. Assimilation was no solution. “Neither reform, nor baptism, neither education nor emancipation”, he wrote “will completely open before the Jews of Germany, the doors of social life.”¹ Hess believed that without soil, there was no national life, and he therefore asserted that the reconstruction of Jewish life was the only solution. He was convinced that European powers would see benefits in helping the Jews and believed that France, once the Suez Canal was completed, could help the Jews establish colonies on its shores.

Jewish national reconstruction was to act as a synthesis of Jewish ideals and establish bridges between the “nihilism of the reform Rabbis who have learned nothing” and the “conservatism of the orthodox who have forgotten nothing”.² It was the first systematic expression of the

Zionist idea. With it, he brought the messianic ideal from the realm of idealism and spirituality to the more temporal level of a practical programme to be carried out by the Jews themselves.

Leon Pinsker (1821–91) argued in his *Auto-Emancipation* (1882) that anti-Semitism was not a temporary phenomenon but “an inherited aberration of the human mind” and therefore the fight to eradicate it “can only be in vain”. The emancipation of the Jews was never a matter of course and its self-interested logic could be reversed at any time. He therefore concluded that “the proper and only remedy would be the creation of a Jewish nationality, of a people living upon its own soil; the auto-emancipation of the Jews . . . The international Jewish question must receive a national solution.”³

The territory on which the tasks of self-liberation and national reconstruction were to be accomplished had to be productive and large enough for several millions but its location did not seem to matter a great deal. Pinsker thought that it “might form a small territory in North America, or a sovereign pashalik in Asiatic Turkey.”⁴

Pinsker presided over the first international Jewish conference at Kattowice (Poland) in 1884. In collaboration with *Hoveve Zion* (Lovers of Zion), he launched Zionism as Jewish self-assertion and nurtured the first Jewish agricultural settlements in Palestine. Although Pinsker was interested in agricultural Zionism, he was not enthusiastic about linking the Jewish national idea to Palestine, associated in Jewish minds with religious notions of messianic redemption. Political Zionism was more interested in acquiring a territory on which to found an independent Jewish state. This could have been any territory, not necessarily Palestine.

A Country for the Jews

Theodor Herzl (1860–1904), a Hungarian journalist, was also preoccupied with anti-Semitism and first conceived political Zionism as a solution to the massive conversion of Jewish children to Catholicism. He was subsequently persuaded to drop the idea in favour of a territory-based Jewish national movement. The 1894 Dreyfus affair in France, in which a Jewish French officer was accused of spying for Germany, convinced him that anti-Semitism was a perpetual and unalterable force in Jewish life. In his search for a territory to colonize, he selected Argentina and campaigned with wealthy Jews to sponsor Jewish colonization of Argentina.

In 1896, Herzl published an influential pamphlet which he called *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State). In it, he argued that anti-Semitism could be harnessed to reinforce a Jewish identity, which could freely develop in a Jewish state in either Argentina or Palestine. Herzl recognized that the idea was not new but that his contribution lay in the practical programme he was proposing: “I do not claim the idea is new . . . The only novelty lies in the method whereby I launch the idea and then organize the Society, and finally the State.”⁵

He proposed a specific scheme whose propelling force was the plight of the Jews. Herzl believed that assimilation had failed and that however much the assimilationist Jews tried to be loyal citizens of their native lands they would always be considered ‘aliens’ because the power relationship in the societies in which they lived favoured the majority not the minority.

Herzl was a strong believer in power politics and was contemptuous of the humanitarian ideals of the Enlightenment. His was not the humanitarian nationalism of the romantic movement of Herder, Hegel or Mazzini. The latter believed in the “sisterhood of nations” and in progress born out of the collective life of the human race, whereas Herzl held the view that “Universal brotherhood is not even a beautiful dream.” Like the post-Darwinian militarist nationalism of Treitschk, Herzl’s was based on idealizing struggle and conflict as supreme channels of human redemption. Indeed, Herzl firmly believed that “Conflict is essential to man’s highest efforts.”⁶

Herzl opposed the idealism of the romantic thinkers and favoured the realism of Nietzsche’s belief that the master impulse of life is power. To achieve power, no effort is too great and no hurdle too daunting. Like Machiavelli, he firmly believed will is a driving force of events, force and craft are necessary weapons, and ultimately the state is power. The emancipation of Jews being doomed to failure, the assimilation only a temporary reprieve before the unalterable ugliness of anti-Semitism struck again, the Jews had to have power; and the state being power, the Jews had to have a state: “In the world as it now is and will probably remain, for an indefinite period,” he writes, “might takes precedence over right.”⁷

Herzl proposed to turn anti-Semitism to the advantage of the Jews and the pursuit of power: “Affliction binds us together, and thus united, we suddenly discover our strength. Yes, we are strong enough to form a State . . . The governments of all countries scourged by anti-Semitism

will be keenly interested in obtaining sovereignty for us.”⁸ He proposed Argentina and Palestine but warned against the method of gradual infiltration of Jews because sooner or later infiltration “is bound to end badly. For there comes the inevitable moment when the government in question, under pressure of the native populace – which feels itself threatened – puts a stop to further influx of Jews. Immigration, therefore, is futile unless it is based on our guaranteed autonomy.”⁹

After noting that the infiltration of Jews into Argentina had produced some discontent, he turned his attention to Palestine where he proposed that a Jewish state would “form a part of a wall of defence for Europe in Asia, an outpost of civilization against barbarism”.¹⁰ The trouble was that Palestine was already inhabited – and this fact would constitute the most fundamental problem the Zionists would have to face after securing Great Power support for their scheme.

Most Zionists and Zionist writing deliberately ignored the existence and the rights of the overwhelming Muslim and Christian majority in Palestine, even though the establishment of the exclusively Jewish state, which they preached, would necessarily entail the expulsion of the existing population.

Deception was, therefore, inherent in the Zionist project. Max Nordeau recounted with pride how he instructed the first Zionist Congress, which met in Basle in August 1897, in the art of linguistic deception: “I did my best to persuade the claimants of the Jewish state in Palestine that we might find a circumlocution that would express all that we meant by saying it in a way so as to avoid provoking the Turkish rulers of the coveted land. I suggested *Heimstatte* (homeland) as a synonym for ‘state’ . . . This is the history of the much commented upon expression. It was equivocal but we all understood what it meant. To us it signified *Judenstaat* (Jewish state) then and it signifies the same now.”¹¹

But the first priority was to secure support for the project of colonizing Palestine, whose connections to Jewish history made its appeal more powerful in the campaign of recruiting Jewish supporters for the Zionist goal. Thus, upon being elected President of the Zionist Organization by the 1897 Zionist Congress, Herzl looked to Germany for support for “a publicly recognized, legally secured homeland in Palestine”. However, Germany had neither the power nor the influence to secure the necessary support from Constantinople, where the Sultan strongly rejected Herzl’s request for the colonization of Palestine.

The Jewish-Ottoman Land Company (JOLC) was Herzl's blueprint for the colonization of Palestine. Intrinsic to the shared aims of the Zionist Organization and the JOLC was the concept of the transfer of the Palestinian Arabs from Palestine.

Herzl also had his own ploy for getting rid of the Muslim and Christian majority population in Palestine. He recommended that the Zionists occupy the land in Palestine and gradually spirit the penniless population out of the country by denying it employment.

During his only visit to Palestine (October 26–November 4, 1898) Herzl noted, with emotion, that a group of “daring” Zionist colonists on horseback who greeted him reminded him of “the Far West cowboys of American plains”.¹²

There were Jewish leaders who refused the deception and condemned the injustice inherent in the project. Hebrew essayist and humanist Ahad Ha-am had visited Palestine in 1891 and in his report entitled “The Truth from Palestine” he perceptively identified Zionism's fundamental problem in Palestine: the Arab people. He observed and strongly disapproved of how the early Zionist colonists were dealing with the Palestinian Arabs and warned that Jewish settlers must not arouse the wrath of the people of the country: “Yet what do our brethren do in Palestine? Just the very opposite! Serfs they were in the lands of the Diaspora and suddenly they find themselves in freedom, and this change has awakened in them an inclination to despotism. They treat the Arabs with hostility and cruelty, deprive them of their rights, offend them without cause, and even boast of these deeds, and nobody among us opposes this despicable and dangerous inclination.”¹³ But it was Herzl, and not Ahad Ha-am, who led the Zionist Organization.

Seeking Support from the Imperial Powers

The Zionists turned their attention to Britain. Jewish pogroms in Russia at the turn of the century resulted in a flood of Russian-Jewish immigrants to Britain, whose government came under pressure to restrict the flood of Jewish immigration. The Balfour government appointed a royal commission to examine the question of immigration and Theodor Herzl, the President of the Zionist Organization, persuaded the commission to hear him as an expert witness. Herzl emphasized to his British interlocutors

and to the strongly anti-Zionist Lord Rothschild the community of interests that existed between Zionism and British imperialism.

Furthermore, he played to the anti-Semitism of the British Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain whom he asked to allow the Zionists to colonize Cyprus. Chamberlain responded by saying that Cyprus was already inhabited by Muslims and Greeks, and he could not evict white settlers for the benefit of newcomers. Herzl suggested that with Jewish money, the Muslims would leave, and the Greeks would gladly sell their lands and return to Athens.

Herzl then tried to persuade both Chamberlain and the Minister for Foreign Affairs Lord Lansdown to allow the Zionists to colonize the Egyptian Sinai as a stepping stone to Palestine. But Lord Cromer, the British Consul-General and effective ruler of Egypt, was opposed to Zionist colonization of the Sinai and blocked the idea.

Chamberlain wanted to find an area of the British Empire that was not inhabited by white settlers. He proposed Uganda, but Herzl wanted a territory in or near Palestine and informed Chamberlain that the Zionists could also settle Uganda at a later date. Eventually Herzl recommended acceptance of the Uganda offer to the sixth Zionist Congress which met in Basle in August 1903. Although a majority voted for the Uganda proposal, the Russian delegates led by people like Chaim Weizmann, who would later emerge as the leader of the Zionists, strongly opposed it.

With Herzl's death in 1904, the Zionists refused to consider alternatives to Palestine. Weizmann made the strategically important decision to move to Britain in order to, as he put it "*reculer pour mieux sauter*" ("Retreat in order to better advance") and because Britain "seemed likely to show sympathy for a movement like ours". He succeeded in meeting Arthur Balfour in 1906 and impressed upon him the Zionist opposition to the Uganda offer and their insistence on Palestine. The wealthy Jewish banker Lord Rothschild was also converted to Zionism and his influence, wealth and power would prove invaluable to Zionist efforts to enlist Great Britain's support.

World War I created a change in Palestine's circumstances. The Zionists' were associated with the Allied Powers and the expected victory over the sick Ottoman Empire meant that the latter's hold on Palestine would be ended and the imperial interests of European colonial powers would be imposed.

The Zionists now concentrated their efforts on securing the support of the Great Powers, particularly that of Britain and the United States, for their goal of establishing a ‘homeland’ in Palestine. They faced two major problems: how to secure international and Jewish support for the Zionist scheme; and how to deal with the anticipated Arab resistance to their designs on Palestine. An extensive propaganda campaign was launched both in the United States and Britain. Weizmann enlisted the help of C. P. Scott, the influential editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, who launched a pro-Zionist propaganda campaign which proved enormously valuable.

In November 1914, Weizmann wrote to Scott outlining the key points of pro-Zionist propaganda, which Scott would use with incalculable effect. They centred on the community of interests between Zionism and British imperialism. “We can reasonably say,” wrote Weizmann to Scott, “that should Palestine fall within the British sphere of influence and should Britain encourage Jewish settlement there, as a British dependency, we could have in twenty to thirty years a million Jews out there, perhaps more; they would develop the country, bring back civilization to it and form a very effective guard for the Suez Canal.”¹⁴

In December 1914, Scott introduced Weizmann to Lloyd George and Herbert Samuel, a minister in the Liberal government of Herbert Asquith and the first Jewish member of the Cabinet. Samuel informed Weizmann that he was preparing a memorandum to Prime Minister Asquith on the subject of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Samuel’s role would prove to be one of the most powerful instruments by which the Zionists influenced British decisions.

Prominent writers and figures such as Herbert Sidebotham, Norman Bentwich, later to be Attorney-General for Palestine, and Harry Sacher, a barrister who would later advocate that the British mandate over Palestine last “for ever”, were won over to the Zionist cause. They began an intensive pro-Zionist propaganda campaign, which emphasized Zionism’s strategic value to the British Empire. In the meantime, Britain was still preoccupied with winning the war, defeating Turkey, and dismantling the Ottoman Empire. For that purpose, it turned its attention to the Arabs. Its approach was a mixture of deception, betrayal and was ultimately moved by the imperial impulse to dominate.

The Anglo-Arab Agreement

On October 24, 1915, Sir Henry McMahon, British High Commissioner in Egypt, sent to Sharif Hussein of Mecca what may be regarded as the most important international document in the history of the Arab national movement. On behalf of Britain, Sir McMahon made a number of pledges, which brought the Arabs into the war against Turkey and on the side of the Allies. McMahon informed Hussein that he was authorized by the British government to give a pledge to the Arabs that with the exception of certain parts of Asia Minor and Syria, "Great Britain is prepared to recognize and uphold the independence of the Arabs in all the regions lying within the frontiers proposed by the Sherif of Mecca."¹⁵ After an exchange of a few more notes, the Anglo-Arab agreement was considered concluded. The Sherif undertook to declare an Arab revolt and to denounce Turkey as an enemy of Islam. He also undertook to use his power and material resources to help in the task of defeating Turkey. Great Britain in exchange explicitly undertook to recognize and uphold Arab independence in a defined Arab area, which included Palestine.

In fulfilment of his part of the agreement, Sherif Hussein declared, on June 5, 1916, an Arab revolt against Turkish rule and Arab forces started attacking Turkish garrisons.

The Sykes-Picot Agreement

Shortly after the conclusion of the Anglo-Arab Agreement in late 1915, Britain and France renewed their negotiations aimed at reaching agreement on the division of the Middle East into zones of influence. France, which had not been reconciled to British occupation of Egypt, had made it clear from the beginning of the war that her share of Ottoman spoils should be at least equal to that claimed by Britain. As a result, France laid claim to the whole of Syria (including Lebanon and Palestine). François Georges-Picot for the French and Sir Mark Sykes for the British agreed on a scheme, which they took to Petrograd, Russia, in March 1916 and opened negotiations with the Russian government with a view to agreeing what each government should get when the Ottoman Empire was finally carved up.

The three governments agreed on a scheme whereby after the war France would be given a free hand in Syria, southern Anatolia and the

Mosul region in Iraq, Russia would control Constantinople and large parts of Eastern Anatolia, and Britain would control Baghdad, Basra, the Persian Gulf and the ports of Haifa and Acre. For various political reasons all three powers wanted to control Palestine. Britain convinced her allies to postpone the question of control of Palestine for a later date and to temporarily agree on an international administration for Palestine “the form of which is to be decided upon in conjunction with the other allies and the representatives of the Sharif of Mecca”.¹⁶

The Arabs believed that the area to be declared an Arab state with the help and support of Great Britain was, according to the Anglo-Arab Agreement, to include Palestine. Subsequently a controversy would form around whether or not the British actually promised the Arabs independence in this area. Zionist writers and some British apologists for Zionism claimed that Palestine was not included in the area that was to be proclaimed an independent Arab state.

However, the areas excluded from British pledges to support and uphold Arab independence had been specifically spelled out by MacMahon: “The district of Mersin and Alexandretta, and portions of Syria lying to the West of the districts or vilayets of Damascus, Homs, Hama and Aleppo, cannot be said to be purely Arab, and must on that account be excepted from the proposed delimitation.”

McMahon had not excluded Palestine from Arab rule. In fact, Dr Arnold Toynbee of the Foreign Office Political Intelligence Department argued that McMahon had in fact earmarked Palestine as part of the Arab state. Israeli historian Benny Morris reached a similar conclusion in his book, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist–Arab Conflict, 1881–1999*: “The Arabs argued that, as Palestine was not to the west but to the south-west of Damascus, and as it had not been explicitly excluded, it was to be part of the Arab state. On balance it appears that they were right. McMahon had specifically set aside for ‘non-Arab’ rule Lebanon and the north-western Syrian coastal regions. Motivated by concerns for French sensibilities, he had omitted explicit reference to Palestine, and nowhere in his letters had he concerned himself with Zionism or Jewish claims.”¹⁷

By agreeing to carve up the collapsing Ottoman Empire into spheres of influence, the British were in fact knowingly violating their own pledges and commitments to the Arabs to help achieve and uphold Arab independence. “The Sykes–Picot Agreement”, wrote historian

George Antonius, “is a shocking document. It is not only the product of greed at its worst, that is to say, of greed allied to suspicion and so leading to stupidity: it also stands out as a startling piece of double-dealing.”¹⁸

Zionism as an Extension of British Imperialism

Although the headquarters of the Zionist movement were in Germany, it was in England that the most momentous developments were taking place. Sir Herbert Samuel, the Home Secretary who was a Jew and a Zionist, was to prove instrumental in getting Cabinet support for his plan to establish a national home for the Jews in Palestine with the help of Britain and the United States.

On November 9, 1914, Samuel started lobbying his Cabinet colleagues for support for his Zionist plans. Sir Samuel (later Viscount Samuel) published the note of his first important conversation on the subject with Sir Edward Grey, then Foreign Secretary. He told him that the Turkish Empire would soon be broken up and: “Perhaps the opportunity might arise for the fulfilment of the ancient aspiration of the Jewish people and the restoration there of a Jewish State.”¹⁹

To win Sir Edward Grey’s support for the idea, Samuel placed a particular emphasis on the Jewish state’s usefulness to British imperialism. “I thought that British influence ought to play a considerable part in the formation of such a state,” he wrote, “because the geographical situation of Palestine, and especially its proximity to Egypt, *would render its goodwill to England a matter of importance to the British Empire.*”²⁰ [Author’s italics.]

Grey found the notion of the restoration of the Jewish people’s historical aspirations had a strong sentimental attraction and agreed to endorse the plan. He wanted to know, however, if Samuel thought that Syria must necessarily go with Palestine. Samuel responded by saying that “on the contrary it would be inadvisable to include such places as Beirut and Damascus, since they contained *a large non-Jewish population which could not be assimilated*”.²¹ Samuel was careful not to tell Grey that the population of Palestine was about 93% Arab, and like their brethren in the rest of Syria “could not be assimilated”. He did make reference to the Arab presence in Palestine but only to dismiss their importance and describe them as “elements which were to be found in the present

population of Palestine” as if there was only a handful of Arabs scattered here and there within the larger non-Arab body of the population.

Dissimulation of the reality of Palestine was imperative for the Zionists if they were to convince British politicians of the feasibility of their design on Palestine. After meeting Samuel for the first time in December 1914, Weizmann recorded his surprise on finding a British Cabinet member whose Zionist plans were more ambitious than his.

Samuel made his most thorough and impressive arguments in a memorandum in March 1915, which he sent to the Cabinet. He had considered the plan carefully and concluded that it was impractical to establish a Jewish state in a Palestine that was overwhelmingly Arab. The solution lay in the establishment of British control over Palestine to allow for massive Jewish immigration to transform the demographics of Palestine while denying the Arabs self-government.

Weizmann reached a similar conclusion. It was not enough to simply demand a British protectorate over Palestine with some form of Anglo-Zionist joint control. He wanted to ensure that the responsibility for wresting Palestine from its inhabitants was assumed by the Zionists under British control. “I therefore thought”, wrote Weizmann, “the middle course should be adopted: viz. the Jews take over the country: the whole burden of organization (of the takeover enterprise) falls on them, but for the next ten or fifteen years they work under a British Protectorate.”²²

How to “take over the country” and what exactly this “burden of organization” implied was not revealed by Weizmann. But it was already clear that the project of seizing Palestine would require a clever policy of manipulation and deception.

This was already in evidence when Sir Herbert Samuel elicited the support of Sir Edward Grey by hiding the fact that Palestine was already inhabited by an overwhelming majority of Palestinian Arabs. Thus, to get the necessary British government support, the Zionists would couch their ambitions in language carefully designed to appeal to their audience’s imperialism, religious beliefs, sentimentalism and even anti-Semitism.

A Campaign of Deception

To other audiences, such as British public opinion, the Zionists would deny that they had ambitions to seize Palestine or that they wanted

any privileged positions within it. In a letter to *The Times*, on May 24, 1917, Weizmann addressed British public opinion and claimed (italics in the original): “The Zionists are not demanding in Palestine monopolies or exclusive privileges, nor are they asking that any part of Palestine should be administered by a Chartered Company to the detriment of others. It always was and remains a cardinal principle of Zionism as a democratic movement that all races and sects in Palestine should enjoy full justice and liberty . . .”²³

Yet, the previous October, the British Zionist Organization of which Weizmann was the president presented to the British government a “Formal Statement” in which it requested (italics in the original):

1. *The Jewish Chartered Company is to have power to exercise the right of pre-emption of Crown and other lands and to acquire for its own use all or any concessions which may at any time be granted by the suzerain government or governments.*
2. *The present population, being too small, too poor and too little trained to make rapid progress, requires the introduction of a new and progressive element in the population.*²⁴

This extraordinary double-standard policy involved more than simple duplicity and manipulation. It required incredible daring and presumption on the part of a group of foreigners to arrogate to themselves the right to judge the people of Palestine as being too small, too poor and unable to “progress” and desperately needing, indeed requiring, the introduction of alien elements to take over the country.

What sets the Zionist ambition apart from traditional imperialism is that unlike colonial powers, the Zionists had no power. They had no army, controlled no seas and had no financial interest they could use as a pretext for invading Palestine: traditional imperialism ‘civilized’ by destroying native cultures and superimposing the imperial power’s own values on the indigenous people, all the while subordinating the economic interests of the colonized people to those of the colonizers. Zionism, on the other hand, proposed not the ‘civilizing’ conversion of the indigenous people to Zionist values, but the oppression and eventual displacement of the indigenous culture and its total replacement by a new culture and a new nation of settlers.

The programme was as radical as its authors were bereft of the traditional means of colonial and imperial powers to carry it out by force. Hence the temporary necessity of infiltrating themselves into Palestine, under the shield of an imperial power able to impose its will by force of arms.

Securing British Support

In his March 1915 memorandum to the Cabinet, Samuel argued the strategic and imperial benefits which would accrue to the British Empire from extending a protectorate to Palestine and from helping to establish a Jewish national home. Prime Minister Asquith, who was still indifferent to Zionism, remained unconvinced. He remarked: “Curiously enough the only other partisan of this proposal is Lloyd George, who, I need not say, does not give a damn for the Jews or their past or future, but thinks it will be an outrage to let the Holy Places pass into the possession or under the protectorate of ‘agnostic, atheistic France.’”²⁵

With the support of the *Manchester Guardian* propaganda campaign the suggestion was made that Zionist settlement of Palestine would be of strategic and political value to the British Empire. Leading British politicians were being won to the cause of Zionism. Lloyd George, Minister of Ammunitions, was already interested in Zionism and both Scott and Weizmann made sure that this interest developed into concrete support. Lloyd George was also grateful to Weizmann, who was a chemist by profession, for having discovered a new process for the production of acetone, a substance needed in the manufacture of explosives, and would later say: “Acetone converted me to Zionism.”

Sir Mark Sykes, Assistant Secretary to the War Cabinet, supported Sir Herbert Samuel’s plans for Jewish colonization of Palestine and had already tried unsuccessfully to use the plan as leverage to appeal to American Jewry to get America into the war. He now, in October 1916, learned from a pro-Zionist Armenian (a certain James Malcolm, almost certainly sent by the Zionists) of the important influence the Chairman of the American Zionist Committee Justice Louis Brandeis seemed to have over US President Woodrow Wilson, and the role he could play in helping bring America into the war on the side of the Allies.

Sykes then petitioned the Cabinet to enter into direct negotiations with the Zionists. Elevated to the status of a negotiating party with the

British government, the Zionists quickly scored their second victory when they were permitted to use official British channels for their international correspondence.

In December 1916, the Asquith coalition government fell. Lloyd George, a fervent imperialist, replaced Herbert Asquith as Prime Minister. Lloyd George had been converted to Zionism by Weizmann's contributions to the war effort and by the need for the Allies to gain valuable Jewish support throughout Europe, particularly in Russia. Arthur Balfour, who claimed to have "always been a Zionist, long before the War", became Foreign Secretary. Lord Robert Cecil, who described himself as "a Zionist by passionate conviction" was Assistant-Foreign Secretary. Lord Milner, described by Zionists as a steadfast advocate of a Jewish National Home, was appointed to the War Cabinet.

With these men, Cabinet support for Zionism was assured. Herbert Samuel resigned but, as the Zionist Attorney-General of the Palestine government Norman Bentwich recalled, Samuel's freedom from the Government made him "better able to guide the Zionist approach to the British Government and to be one of the founding authors of the Mandate."²⁶

In February 1917, Sir Mark Sykes, a member of the War Secretariat and the link between the Zionists and the Cabinet (and 'the Godfather of the Declaration'), began official negotiations with the Zionists. Sykes was aware that the Zionist project for Palestine through the imperial protection of Great Britain would be opposed by France, which wanted to control all of Syria including Palestine, and by the Palestinian Arabs who constituted about 93% of the population of Palestine.

The Zionists simply ignored the Palestinian Arab problem but they could not ignore French imperial designs. With the help of Sykes and Baron Edmond de Rothschild, Nahum Sokolov, the Polish Zionist leader, managed to gain French support for the Zionist cause. The Bolshevik Revolution and the collapse of Czarist Russia made France more amenable to the British demand that Palestine no longer be internationalized, but instead should come under the British zone of influence. With the end of the 'internationalization of Palestine' idea, one more obstacle was removed and Zionist designs on Palestine were set to receive official British government blessings.

British Leaders' Motives for Supporting Zionism

It is important to examine the motives of the leading British supporters of Zionism. Lloyd George wanted to repay a debt incurred through Weizmann's contributions to the war effort. The Balfour Declaration was his repayment of this debt and reflected no belief on his part that the Zionists had a "right" over Palestine. "I am not now putting the case", he told the House of Commons in 1936, "that the Arabs are only a modern introduction into Palestine and that the ancient inhabitants were the Jews. There is nothing in this case . . ." ²⁷

Repaying a debt with someone else's country, particularly when Britain had solemnly agreed to recognize and uphold its independence for the people who already inhabited it, did not seem to bother Lloyd George's conscience or sense of justice. As historian Joseph Jeffries put it: "If land was the only possible recompense, there were the Isle of Wight and the Isle of Man, and other British places in Britain's free gift, ready to be handed over." ²⁸

Churchill would later explain that the Bolshevik movement in Russia was animated by a disproportionately high number of Jewish leaders and that Zionism offered a salutary competing force that would attract the Jews away from communism. This, according to Churchill, made Zionism of profound significance for the whole world.

Churchill and others also readily accepted the thesis that Zionism was "in complete harmony with the true interests of the British Empire". ²⁹ Making Britain a sponsor of the Zionist project would secure Palestine as a bulwark to the British presence in Egypt and the Suez Canal and act as a land link to India.

Thus, after the Balfour Declaration was issued, in November 1917, British statesmen "vied with each other" in expressing support for a 'Jewish Commonwealth' in Palestine. At a public rally in December 1917, Neville Chamberlain, a junior Minister, affirmed that the new Jewish state in Palestine "should be associated with some great progressive people, such as the British Empire or the American Commonwealth . . ." ³⁰

It is also instructive to note that British war aims were framed in the traditional context of imperial ambitions. Thus, while publicly claiming to have no such sordid motives as wishing to seize Germany's colonies, Lloyd George admitted, when pressed by President Wilson's representative Colonel House in November 1917, that the Allied Powers

wanted the German colonies, an independent Arabia under British suzerainty and a Zionist Palestine under British or American control.

There were also personal motives for supporting Zionism. Mark Sykes seems to have shared Balfour's views of Zionism's religious appeal. Sykes would later develop serious doubts and somewhat regret his role after he had been "shocked" by the bitterness Zionism was eliciting in Palestine. Norman Bentwich, the Attorney-General in the Mandatory Government in Palestine and a Zionist, observed that both Sykes and Balfour were "deeply interested in moral issues, in religion and philosophy, and both felt the spiritual appeal of the Zionist idea".³¹

Lord Milner, who was Governor in South Africa before and during the Boer War, seems to have transposed the views of his South African experience to Palestine. He thus, "equated the Arabs of Palestine with the backward Boers, and the Jewish settlers with the enterprising 'Outlanders' – some of them Jews – of the Transvaal". He was therefore convinced that the "future of Palestine cannot possibly be left to be determined by temporary impressions and feelings of the Arab majority in the country of the present day".³²

In playing a leading role in getting Cabinet approval for his declaration of support for the Zionists, Balfour was acting on more than simply genuine feelings of sympathy for the suffering of the Jews or out of determined ignorance about the reality in Palestine.

Arnold Toynbee has suggested that gentile Zionists such as Balfour might have been driven by a sense of guilt arising out of subconscious anti-Semitism. At any rate, Balfour's enthusiastic support of Zionism could have been partly motivated by his desire to spare Britain any further influx of Jewish immigrants, who would now be attracted by a British promise of a Jewish National Home in Palestine. Indeed, as Prime Minister, Balfour was quite firm in his resolve to control alien, meaning largely Jewish, immigration to England.

He explained the reason to the House of Commons in 1905. "A state of things could easily be imagined in which", he told the House, "it would not be to the advantage of the civilization of this country that there should be an immense body of persons who, however patriotic, able and industrious, however much they threw themselves into the national life, remained a people apart, and not merely held a religion differing from the vast majority of their fellow-countrymen, but only intermarried among themselves."³³

The desire to control the number of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe was explicitly used by American Zionists as an argument to get support from the Wilson administration. During their meeting in Paris in June 1919, the leading American Zionist and advisor to President Wilson, Justice Brandeis, told Balfour that he was convinced that Zionism was the answer to the problem of the disposition of the vast number of Russian Jewish immigrants pouring into America. Balfour agreed and remarked that this was why they were both such ardent Zionists. Balfour further confided in Brandeis that he could not see how President Wilson could possibly reconcile his adherence to Zionism with his commitment to the principle of self-determination.

In May 1917, Justice Brandeis transmitted to the State Department the Zionist programme of “taking over” Palestine which the Zionists had presented to the British Cabinet in their negotiations for a declaration of support from London. The programme was summarized by Justice Brandeis thus:

Palestine is to be recognized as the Jewish National Home. Jews of all countries to be accorded full liberty of immigration.

Jews to enjoy full national, political and civic rights according to their place of residence in Palestine.

A Charter to be granted to a Jewish Company for the development of Palestine.

The Hebrew language to be recognized as the official language of the Jewish Province.³⁴

Palestine was to be opened for unlimited immigration of Jews who would be granted full political status and exclusive economic control through their ‘Company’, and cultural ascendancy through the declaration of Hebrew as the official language. The audacity of the project of ‘taking over’ Palestine was nothing short of remarkable.

Preparing The Balfour Declaration

In July 1917, after months of negotiations between Sir Mark Sykes and the Zionist leaders, Lord Rothschild submitted on behalf of the Zionist Organization a draft of a declaration stating that the British government

“accepts the principle of recognizing Palestine as the National Home of the Jewish people”. The draft seemed to grant protection for the immediate transformation of Palestine into a Jewish state, but without any regard to the majority Muslim and Christian Palestinian population of the country.

There was strong opposition from the influential non-Zionist Jews of Britain, led mainly by Secretary of State for India Edwin Montagu, who objected to Judaism being used to denote a nationality not a religion. He feared that the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine would prejudice the acquired rights of the Jews in other states as well as violate the rights of the Arab majority in Palestine.

To counter Jewish opposition to Zionist plans, Weizmann and Rothschild wrote to Balfour, on October 3, urging him to minimize Jewish differences about Zionism and to consider Zionist demands within the context of its usefulness to British imperialism. In another letter, Weizmann stressed again the benefits of a Zionist Palestine serving Western imperialism, a theme which, fifty years later, would be used effectively to rally American support for an Israel elevated to the status of ‘strategic asset’. Weizmann promised that “a reconstructed Palestine will become a very great asset to the British Empire”.³⁵

When the Cabinet met on October 4, Montagu renewed his attack and obtained a further delay although Lloyd George, Balfour and other Zionist supporters were present in full strength. Claude Montefiore, President of the Anglo-Jewish Association, also put up strong resistance to the proposed Cabinet support for Zionist plans. He stressed that it was “very significant that anti-Semites are always very sympathetic to Zionism.”³⁶

Interestingly enough, Balfour seems to have been misled into believing that the overwhelming majority of the Jews supported Zionism. Certainly he advanced that argument to try to win Cabinet support for the pro-Zionist policy and the Declaration. In the end, the Cabinet could not ignore these attacks by influential British Jews. The Cabinet also had to consider that British troops had not yet entered Palestine and could not very well be expected to be greeted as liberators by the Arab population of Palestine if a Cabinet declaration in favour of Zionism ignored fundamental Arab rights in Palestine.

Thus, after consideration of six different drafts and Jewish and Zionist memoranda, the Cabinet decided to take strong non-Zionist

Jewish protests into account and to water down Zionist demands. The final draft thus eliminated any reference to a Jewish republic or commonwealth and replaced it with a formula no longer making Palestine *the* National Home of the Jewish people but establishing *in* Palestine *a* National Home for the Jewish people. It also replaced the formula contained in the original Zionist draft which made the British government incur a responsibility to “secure the achievement” of the Jewish homeland, by an expression of sympathy and a promise to “facilitate the achievement”.

The final draft was cabled to the American government, which handed it to Justice Brandeis and his Zionist group for approval. The ‘Brandeis regime’ as Wise and de Haas aptly call the influential American Zionist group led by Justice Brandeis, made some modifications, and submitted the draft to Colonel House, who in turn submitted it to President Wilson. Wilson’s approval was cabled to the British government on October 17.

NOTES

- 1 Quoted in Sir Isaiah Berlin, *The Life and Opinions of Moses Hess* (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1959), p. 27.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 32.
- 3 Leo Pinsker, “Auto-Emancipation”, in Arthur Hertzberg (ed.), *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and a Reader* (New York: Meridian Books, 1960), pp. 179–98.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 197.
- 5 Marvin Lowenthal (ed. and trans.), *The Diaries of Theodor Herzl* (New York: The Dial Press, 1956), p. 80.
- 6 Theodor Herzl, “The Jewish State”, in Arthur Hertzberg (ed.), *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and a Reader* (New York: Meridian Books, 1960), pp. 204–26, p. 223.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 209.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 220.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 222.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 222.
- 11 Christopher Sykes, “Cross Roads to Israel: Palestine from Balfour to Begin”, in Punyapriya Dasgupta, *Cheated by the World: The Palestinian Experience* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1988), p. 43.
- 12 Raphael Patai (ed.) and Harry Zohn (trans.), *The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, 5 vol. (New York and London: The Herzl Press and Thomas Yoseloff, 1960), p. 743.

- 13 Quoted in Hans Kohn, "Zion and the Jewish National Idea", in Alan R. Taylor and Richard N. Tetlie, *Palestine: A Search for Truth: Approaches to the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Washington, D. C.: Public Affairs Press, 1970), pp. 22–54, p. 39.
- 14 Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error: The Autobiography of Chaim Weizmann* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), p. 149.
- 15 George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1965), p. 170.
- 16 John Marlowe, *The Seat of Pilate: An Account of the Palestine Mandate* (London: The Cresset Press, 1959), p. 19.
- 17 Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict: 1881–1999* (London: John Murray, 1999), pp. 60–70.
- 18 Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, op. cit., p. 248.
- 19 Viscount Samuel, *Memoirs* (London: The Cresset Press, 1945), p. 140.
- 20 Ibid., p. 141.
- 21 Ibid., p. 141.
- 22 J. M. N. Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality* (London: Longman, 1939), p. 144.
- 23 Ibid., p. 149.
- 24 Ibid., p. 149.
- 25 Viscount Samuel, *Memoirs*, op. cit., p. 143.
- 26 Norman and Helen Bentwich, *Mandate Memories: 1918–1948* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), p. 12.
- 27 Quoted in Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality*, op. cit., p. 190.
- 28 Ibid., p. 196.
- 29 Richard P. Stevens, *Weizmann et Smuts: Etude de la Coopération entre l'Afrique du Sud et le Sionisme* (Beyrouth: Institut des études Palestiniennes, 1976), p. 39.
- 30 Norman and Helen Bentwich, *Mandate Memories*, op. cit., p. 17.
- 31 Ibid., p. 13.
- 32 Ibid., p. 16.
- 33 Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration* (London: Valentine-Mitchell, 1961), p. 164.
- 34 Frank E. Manuel, *The Realities of American-Palestine Relations* (Washington, D. C.: Public Affairs Press, 1949), p. 166.
- 35 Ibid., p. 519.
- 36 Ibid., p. 526.

2

The Balfour Declaration and the Paris Peace Conference, 1917–1919

On November 2, 1917, the British Cabinet issued the text of the Balfour Declaration in the form of a letter from Arthur Balfour to Lord Rothschild, rather than to the Zionists, in a propaganda effort to obtain Jewish support by associating the Declaration with the prestige of Lord Rothschild. The letter read:

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet.

“His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of the non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.”

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.¹

As is obvious from the plain meaning of the words of the declaration, the British government seemed to be giving cautious support to the Zionist project, committing itself to nothing more than viewing “with favour” and the use of “best endeavours” for the realization of the project. These cautious pledges of support were conditioned by the apparently firmer guarantee to respect the “rights” of the existing population of Palestine.

At the time of the Declaration British troops were not even in physical occupation of Palestine and Britain had no sovereignty whatsoever over Palestine. Its promise to use its best endeavours to facilitate the Zionist project could be interpreted as a promise to give to the Zionists what Britain did not have to give, in violation of the established legal maxim *nemo dat quod non habet* (nobody can give what he does not possess).

Furthermore, the Declaration was formulated in such a way that the implementation of the clause promising that the British government will “view with favour” and “use their best endeavours” to facilitate the Zionist project, could only be done if the more legally binding protection-of-Arab-rights clause “it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of the non-Jewish communities” was deliberately violated. And this because the achievement of the Zionist scheme in Palestine, understood to be the establishment of a Jewish state, could not possibly be done without prejudice to the rights of the Muslims and Christians who constituted between 91% and 93% of the population of Palestine, the remaining population being Jews, half of whom were recent arrivals to Palestine.

Weizmann himself recognized the severe limitations, which the safeguard clause imposed, on the promise to “view with favour”. “A comparison of the two texts,” wrote Weizmann, “the one approved by the Foreign Office and the Prime Minister, and the one adopted on October 4, after Montagu’s attack – shows a painful recession from what the Government was prepared to offer . . . the second introduced the subject of the ‘civic and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities’ in such a fashion as to impute possible oppressive intentions to the Jews, and can be interpreted to mean such limitations on our work as completely to cripple it.”²

Weizman recognized that the Declaration was in fact built on weak foundations: “The Balfour Declaration of 1917 was built on air, and a foundation had to be laid for it through years of exacting work; every day and every hour of these last ten years, when opening the newspapers, I thought: Whence will the next blow come? I trembled lest the British Government would call me and ask: ‘Tell us, what is this Zionist Organization? Where are they your Zionists?’ For these people think in terms different from ours. The Jews, they knew, were against us.”³

Weizmann's strategy was that the Declaration should be used as a departure point not as a document which gave the Zionists rights over Palestine and solved all their problems. He thus urged the Zionists who gave the Declaration an optimistic interpretation to understand that the Balfour Declaration "would mean exactly what we would make it mean – neither more nor less".⁴

Ahad Ha-am also tried to warn his fellow Zionists against unwarrantedly optimistic interpretations of the Declaration. In an introduction to his *Collected Essays* published in 1920, he again disapproved of the Zionist attitude toward the Arabs: "The Arab people regarded by us as non-existent ever since the beginning of the colonization of Palestine, heard [of the Zionist expectations and plans] and believed that the Jews were coming to drive them from their soil and deal with them at their own will." Ahad Ha-am stressed that the Balfour Declaration clearly made it impossible for the Zionists to try to build a National Home at the expense of the Arabs because "If you build your house not in any empty space, but in a place where there are also other houses and inhabitants, you are the unrestricted master only inside your own house. Outside the door all the inhabitants are partners, and the management of the whole has to be directed in agreement with the interests of them all."⁵

But most Zionist interpreters of the Balfour Declaration tried to minimize the importance of the safeguard clauses protecting the rights of the Palestinian people so as to nullify its intentions and effects. Their strategy was to either deny the existence of the Arabs at all, or to denigrate their level of socio-cultural and political development, and therefore justify the inevitable violation of their rights which the Zionist project for Palestine entailed. "The fact has to be faced," wrote a Zionist authority in 1923, "that so far as the great mass of the population [of Palestine] is concerned, the Arabs are immature and irresponsible to the point of childishness."⁶

In his important appraisal of the Balfour Declaration in international law, Professor W. T. Mallison states that the "favor clause" "obligates the British Government to do nothing. Even if a very loose interpretation could somehow conclude that it was a kind of a political commitment, it was at most a very restricted one, and it was further limited by being expressly subordinated to the safeguard clauses." He concludes that: "a persuasive juridical interpretation of the favor clause is that it is a humanitarian measure to allow Jewish refugees to emigrate to Palestine . . .

Even if there were no clear wording stressing the pre-eminence of the safeguards, they would have to be accorded priority over the favor clause since they protected existing rights which the British government had no legal authority to change, or even to ‘prejudice’ as provided in the declaration.”⁷

And indeed it was the British government’s awareness of this contradiction that led it to the use of carefully chosen deceptive language for the Declaration which, British politicians and Zionists alike agree, was the product of careful analysis and word by word examination before it was finally issued. Consequently, the Declaration referred to the Arab majority as “non-Jewish communities” to distort the realities of their presence in, and inalienable rights over, Palestine. It was as if Palestine were inhabited by a Jewish majority and the Muslim and Christian Palestinians were but a minority representing the “non-Jewish communities” in Palestine.

As Joseph Jeffries put it: “we have a Palestine with 91 per cent of its people Arab and 9 percent Jew at the time of the Declaration . . . Half of the Jews were recent arrivals. Before this impalpable reality, what did the framers of the Balfour Declaration do? By an altogether abject subterfuge, under colour of protecting Arab interests, they set out to conceal the fact that the Arabs, to all intents, constituted the population of the country. It called them the ‘non-Jewish communities in Palestine!’ It called the multitude the non-few, it called the 670,000 the non-60,000; out of a hundred it called the 91 the non-9. You might just as well call the British people ‘the non-Continental communities in Great Britain.’”⁸

It was a deliberate obfuscation of the reality. As Jeffries pointed out: “the use of the phrase ‘non-Jewish communities in Palestine’ to describe the Arabs . . . is fraudulent. It was done in order to conceal the true ratio between Arabs and Jews, and thereby to make easier the suppression of the former . . . the drafters of the Declaration . . . concealed the Arabs’ very name and called them ‘existing communities in Palestine,’ as though they were packets of monks who had strayed into the country and here and there had got a foothold in it.”⁹

British and Zionist awareness of the conflict between Zionist claims and Arab rights in Palestine also led to the deceptive phrasing of the safeguard clause protecting Arabs’ “religious and civil rights” but making no mention of political rights and leaving undefined the meaning of civil rights.

In short, the Zionists ensured that the final draft of the Declaration, although substantially watered down from their earlier drafts, deliberately omitted the Arabs' political rights. The same safeguard clause also provided protection to "the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country", thus clearly suggesting that the Zionist project in Palestine was not a mere home for Jewish refugees. It was a project designed to bring about a Jewish state, and this could represent a conflict of dual citizenship to Jews in other countries. That is why the framers of the Declaration sought to meet the apprehensions of Jewish leaders who opposed Zionism, by affirming protection for the rights and privileges of the integrated, assimilated European Jews.

"The insertion of the guarantee is further proof, besides," observed Joseph Jeffries, "of the character of the regime intended under the Declaration in the Holy Land. If the 'National Home' was to be something innocuous, a mere 'national home from home' with a modicum of establishment receiving a stream of visitors, an institution without any political status, then there was no need to guarantee hosts or guests against losing their overseas or overland political status in their place of origin. If 'National Home' meant a State or quasi-State, there was every need for the guarantee."¹⁰

Shortly after the Balfour Declaration was issued, the Zionists sought support for it from the French, American and Italian governments. The support was given somewhat unenthusiastically but with a significant twist in the case of Italian support.

Thus, on May 9, 1918, the Italian government committed itself to facilitating "the foundation in Palestine of a Jewish national centre, on the understanding however that no prejudice shall arise through it to *the legal and political status* of existing religious communities and to the civil and political rights already enjoyed by Israelites in any other country."¹¹ Thus, the Italian government under the guise of supporting the Balfour Declaration, managed to significantly weaken its meaning for the Zionists by explicitly making its support conditional upon the safeguarding of the Arabs' political rights which had been excluded from the Balfour Declaration. The American Congress passed, on September 11, 1922, a Joint Resolution of Congress of sympathy for the Jewish homeland.

At the end of his 1939 analysis of the Balfour Declaration, Joseph Jeffries wrote: "Unlawful in issue, arbitrary in purpose, and deceitful in

wording, the Balfour Declaration is the most discreditable document to which a British Government has set its hand within memory.”¹²

The Declaration was not published in Palestine until May 1920, partly because General Allenby, who headed the British military administration set up in Palestine some six weeks after the issue of the Declaration, had not received any instructions from the British government. This was because, as historian John Marlow observed: “As always, the initiative was left to the Zionist Organization, with the British Government applying the brake, with varying degrees of strength, for various motives and at irregular intervals.”¹³

The Declaration, which caused a storm in the Arab world, served primarily to confirm the Arab suspicions of the true Zionists’ designs on Palestine. Zionist assurances that all the Zionists wanted was merely a ‘home’ for the Jewish people rather than the seizure of Palestine and its transformation into a Jewish state had been received with scepticism by the Arabs before 1917. Now with the Balfour Declaration promising imperial power support for the Zionist programme, the confrontation with Palestinian nationalism in its own land became inevitable.

Agreement with Sharif Hussein

In January 1918, Commander D. G. Hogarth of the Arab Bureau in Cairo took a copy of the Balfour Declaration to Jeddah and showed it to Sharif Hussein. This in itself is significant. It is yet another indication that Palestine was included in the area of Arab independence defined in the Anglo-Arab agreement of 1915, otherwise what would Hussein’s interest be in Palestine had it really been excluded from the area of Arab independence? Hussein continued to believe in British integrity and in Zionist propaganda. He refused to believe that the British had double-crossed him or that the Zionists wanted more than simply to contribute to the economic development of Palestine and bring in Jewish immigrants who would become citizens of the new independent Arab state. Hogarth reported that after Hussein saw the Balfour document “he took it philosophically, contenting himself with an expression of goodwill towards a kinder Semitic race, which he understood (as his phrase made clear) was to lodge in a house occupied by the Arabs”.¹⁴

Hussein told Hogarth that he welcomed Jewish immigration to Arab lands but that he opposed any attempts to set up a Jewish state in

Palestine. Hogarth told him that he was not instructed to warn him that such a state was contemplated by Great Britain, going on to say that the British government wanted him to know that “So far as Palestine is concerned we are determined that no people shall be subjected to another.” Jewish immigration to Palestine would only be allowed “insofar as is compatible with the freedom of the existing population, both economic and political”.¹⁵

Because of the very nature of the Sykes–Picot agreement, “secrecy was regarded as the essence of this agreement,” the British Royal Institute of International Affairs noted in 1938, “which was communicated neither to the Sharif nor to the Italians”.¹⁶ The secrecy ended when the Bolshevik Revolution overthrew the Czar’s regime in November 1917 and published all of Czarist Russia’s secret treaties, including the Sykes–Picot accord. This gave Turkey an opportunity to prove to the Arabs the duplicity of Great Britain, and Turkish rulers quickly relayed the content of the secret treaty to Sharif Hussein and offered him a separate peace treaty and the promise of full autonomy for the Arab provinces of the Empire in return for putting an end to the Arab revolt.

“The news aroused much indignation in Arab circles,” wrote British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, who admitted: “fresh assurances *had* to be given to avoid a rupture.”¹⁷ [Author’s italics.] Greatly disturbed by the possibility of British betrayal, Sharif Hussein conveyed to the British government what he heard from the Turks and demanded to know whether Britain had secretly agreed to the division of Syria, in violation of the Anglo-Arab agreement of 1915.

The same Lord Balfour who three months earlier had so lightly ignored British pledges to the Arabs, dispatched a reply on February 8, 1918 in which he praised the wise leadership of Hussein. Balfour then went on to dismiss what he described as the Turkish policy of “sowing dissension by false and evil insinuations to the Arabs, such as that the Allies intend to occupy Arab territories”.

Balfour then made the following solemn and categorical affirmation: “The Government of His Britannic Majesty repeats its previous promise in respect of the freedom and the emancipation of the Arab peoples.”¹⁸

The British Declaration to the Seven

Despite British assurances after the Balfour Declaration, Arab leaders were still uneasy about British intentions. Seven Arab nationalist leaders living in Cairo met and sent a statement to the British government requesting a full definition of its policy and intentions with regard to the future of the Arab countries.

The British reply came on June 16, 1918. Addressed to the seven Arab leaders, it was called the 'Declaration to the Seven'. It was "by far the most important statement of policy publicly made by Great Britain in connexion with the Arab revolt".¹⁹ It confirmed Britain's pledges to the Arabs and enunciated the principles on which these pledges rested. Furthermore, it provided a comprehensive definition of the British position on Arab territories. With regard to Palestine, it stated that in the Arab territories liberated by the Allied armies (Iraq and Palestine), "It is the wish and desire of His Majesty's Government that the future government of these regions should be based upon the principle of the consent of the governed, and this policy has and will continue to have the support of His Majesty's Government."²⁰

The Declaration to the Seven had a decisive influence on the Arab decision to reject the peace offer made by the Turks, who were poised for a major offensive. For the time being the Arabs decided to keep faith in their British ally. Reassured, Hussein turned down the Turkish peace offer and decided to maintain his faith in the British, whom he believed to be, as he later told historian George Antonius, "an honourable kind, in word and in deed".

Wilson's Fourteen Point Plan

Arab hopes of independence and in the validity of keeping faith with the British were given a boost by the various declarations of US President Wilson, in which he established the basis for the post-war settlement and world peace.

President Wilson delivered a major address in January 1918 in which he enumerated his Fourteen Point Plan of World Peace. Point 12 specifically dealt with the Ottoman Empire: "The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured as a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities that are under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolute unmolested opportunity

of autonomous development . . .” President Wilson concluded his address by emphasizing: “We have spoken, now, surely, in terms too concrete to admit of any further doubt or question. An evident principle runs through the whole program I have outlined. It is the principle of justice to all peoples and nationalities, and their right to live on equal terms of liberty and safety with one another, whether they are strong or weak. Unless this principle is made its foundation, no part of the structure of international justice can stand.”²¹

British Prime Minister Lloyd George specifically endorsed the application of these principles to Palestine. On January 5, two days after President Wilson’s Fourteen Point Plan had been broadcast to the world, Lloyd George, addressing the Trades Union Congress, declared that Arabia, Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine were “in our judgement, entitled to recognition of their separate national conditions”.²²

In an address to the American Congress on February 11, 1918, President Wilson announced his “four principles” on which future peace must be based. He prefaced his four principles with some important demands, which included the demand that “People are not to be handed about from one sovereignty to another by an international conference or an understanding between rivals and antagonists. National aspirations must be respected; people may now be dominated and governed only by their own consent. ‘Self-determination’ is not a mere phrase. It is an imperative principle of action, which statesmen will henceforth ignore at their own peril.”²³

Wilson’s second principle for the peace settlement stated: “Second, that peoples and provinces are not to be bartered about from sovereignty to sovereignty as if they were mere chattels and pawns in a game. Even the great game, now forever discredited, of the balance of Power.”²⁴ In his Mount Vernon address, on July 4, 1918, Wilson demanded that: “The settlement of every question, whether of territory, of sovereignty, of economic arrangement or political relationship [be] upon the basis of the free acceptance of that settlement by the people concerned and not upon the basis of material interest or advantage of any other nation or people which may desire a different settlement for the sake of its own exterior influence or mastery.”²⁵

In speeches in Manchester, England, on December 30, 1918, and Rome, Italy, on January 3, 1919, Wilson repeated his opposition to the discredited system of balance of power. Signs of troubles with the

European colonial powers were already obvious when French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau told the Chamber of Deputies, in December 1918, that he would not renounce the system of balance of power and would use it as “my guiding thought at the peace conference”.²⁶ Balance of power may have been responsible for bringing about calamities and disasters for Europe and the world, but that is precisely the strategy France and Britain were intent on implementing in the Middle East. Former American President Herbert Hoover observed when speaking of President Wilson, his Fourteen Points, and commitment to the principle of self-determination, that President Wilson “was a menacing intruder in the concepts of British, French, and Italian statesmen and a threat to their secret treaties . . .”²⁷

The British and French naturally subscribed to the principles enunciated by President Wilson but only in public. Their actions belied their declarations. Thus, instead of living up to their repeated pledges to their Arab allies and recognizing their contributions to Allied victory, they were more interested in implementing their Sykes–Picot agreement of division of spheres of influence. French troops occupied the coast of Lebanon. Syria (which encompassed Lebanon and Palestine) was thus partitioned between the two European colonial powers.

The Anglo-French Declaration to the Arabs

The Arabs were still hopeful that they would soon receive their promised independence. Emir Feisal, King Hussein’s son, had entered Damascus with his forces on October 1, 1918 and looked forward to the support of the Allies in establishing the promised independent Arab state. On October 3, Arab sovereignty had been proclaimed in Beirut in the name of Prince Feisal and the Arab flag had been hoisted. The French protested and pressured General Allenby into ordering that the flag be removed. The knowledge that Beirut and the northern and western parts of Syria were going to be under French occupation added to the Arabs’ suspicions of the sincerity of the Allied intentions. Arab protest and agitations forced the British and French to issue another declaration reiterating their noble intentions and reaffirming their commitment to the principle of the consent of the governed.

Thus, in their Joint Anglo-French Declaration of November 8, 1918, the two imperial powers reaffirmed that: “The object aimed at by

France and Great Britain in prosecuting in the East the war let loose by the ambition of Germany, is the complete and definite emancipation of the peoples so long oppressed by the Turks, and the establishment of national Governments and Administrations deriving their authority from the initiative and free choice of the indigenous populations . . . Far from wishing to impose on the populations of these regions any particular institutions, they are only concerned to ensure by their support and by adequate assistance the regular working of Governments and Administrations freely chosen by the populations themselves . . .”²⁸ There could hardly have been more solemn an assurance phrased so clearly and unambiguously.

The very same day, November 8, 1918, that the Anglo-French declaration was affirming the two powers’ intention to establish governments on the basis of the free consent of the governed, British officials were meeting with Zionist leaders. They were working out plans for the implementation of the Zionist scheme in Palestine, which would necessitate a violation of the rights of the Palestinian Arab majority. The “Advisory Committee on Palestine” held its third meeting on November 8, 1918 at the home of the former Home Secretary Sir Herbert Samuel. In discussing the proposal which the Zionists should make to the British government about sovereignty and control in Palestine, Weizmann stressed that “whether the formula asked for a protectorate or trusteeship it was absolutely essential that it should indicate that the ultimate object was to make Palestine into a Jewish Palestine.”²⁹

When Sir Herbert Samuel mentioned self-determination for the Jews in Palestine, Weizmann presented what amounted to official Zionist policy with regard to the Palestinian Arabs. He emphasized that there could be no equality in terms of political rights between the Jews and the Palestinian Arabs (a far cry from his mendacious professions to the readers of *The Times* that Zionism was a just and democratic movement) and this because self-determination was “a right and proper principle and would prevent the majorization by the Arabs. Although the Jews were numerically inferior, they were qualitatively superior, and it was necessary to safeguard this superiority from being overwhelmed in the first period by mere weight of numbers. Conditions therefore must be established in Palestine as speedily as possible to allow for the creation of a Jewish majority.”³⁰

Zionist and British Duplicity and Deception

The first step in the process of organizing the takeover of Palestine, as Weizmann had recommended, had now been secured with the Balfour Declaration. The second step now consisted of giving the Zionists some official status in Palestine where they could start the real organizational work necessary for the implementation of their design under British protection. This would be accomplished by the creation and the elevation to official status of a Zionist Commission composed of members of the British, French and Italian Zionist Organizations headed by Weizmann. Sir Roland Storrs, the British Military Governor of Jerusalem, wrote that Weizmann's tacit mission was "to produce certain *fait accompli*, creating an atmosphere favourable to the [Zionist] project".³¹

Once again, duplicity and deception were imperative if the British and Zionists were to avoid evoking hostile reactions from the people of Palestine. Thus, Lord Balfour announced to the House of Lords that the function of the Zionist Commission would be "to investigate the present condition of the Jewish colonies in Palestine, to organize relief work and to supervise reparation of damage done to Zionist colonies during the War, in so far as circumstance will permit". In short, and as Israeli historian Jon Kimche frankly admitted, the British presented the function of the Zionist Commission as "little more than a relief mission to the stricken Jews in Palestine, rather along lines of similar missions by the Red Cross".³²

That was the public explanation. Discreetly, the Zionists managed to get the Foreign Office to issue a statement elevating the Zionist Commission from a humanitarian to a political mission. The statement described the Zionist Commission as "an advisory body to the British authorities there [in Palestine] in all matters relating to Jews or which may effect the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in accordance with the Declaration of His Majesty's Government".³³ Thus, in an apparently innocuous statement, the British Foreign Office was not only giving the Zionist Commission political authority over the Jews in Palestine, it was also restricting any say in the matter of establishing a Jewish national home in Palestine to the British government and the Zionist Commission, again excluding the people most directly affected in Palestine: the majority of its inhabitants.

To complete the process of silencing the voice of the Arabs, the Zionist Commission was granted access to the British military

communication lines as soon as it arrived in Palestine in April 1918. "The Arabs were gagged", noted Jeffries, "through lack of machinery to publish their case: all the machinery which existed was put at the Zionists' disposition for their communications in Palestine and from Palestine throughout the world."³⁴

At the same time, Weizmann set out to literally follow the double-talk policy: one policy for communicating to the British and to other Zionists what was needed to be in a position "to takeover the country"; the other policy for reassuring the anti-Zionists and particularly the Palestinian Arab majority in Palestine of the benevolent intentions of the Zionists. In Cairo, where the Zionist Commission had stopped en route to Palestine, Weizmann and Major Henry Ormsby-Gore, delegated by the Foreign Office to accompany the Commission, were so effective in allaying the fears of Egyptian and Arab leaders that the influential Arabic daily *al-Muqattam*, wrote approvingly of the Zionists. In Palestine, on April 27, Weizmann made a speech in Jerusalem in which he reassured in the most solemn way possible the Arab notables present: "All fears expressed openly or secretly by the Arabs that they are to be ousted from their present position were due either to a fundamental misconception of Zionist aims and intentions or to the malicious activities of (our) common enemies." On the contrary, Weizmann assured his Arab audience, the Zionists had come to live in peace with the Arabs in Palestine and wanted to contribute to the economic and cultural development of the country so that "once more we see rising a strong and regenerated Arab political organism which will revive the glorious traditions of Arab science and literature so much akin to our own".³⁵

The American Zionists followed the same strategy. Meeting at the Zionist Convention in Pittsburgh, they sought to reassure American and world opinion about their intentions in Palestine. They adopted a programme, the first clause of which stated: "We declare for political and civil equality irrespective of race, sex, or faith, of all the inhabitants of the land (Palestine)."³⁶

Zionist Attitude Towards the Arabs

After his meeting with Palestinian Arab leaders, and his assurances of good Zionist intentions in Palestine, Weizmann switched back to the voice of sincerity when he wrote the following message to his wife. The

Arabs, he said, had replied with an amiable speech. He then added: "but it is very difficult to trust them . . . I consider it is unnecessary to bother any more with the Arabs for the present; we have done what was asked of us, we have explained our point of view sincerely and publicly; let them take it or leave it. If the Government would only take it upon itself to settle this thing with the Arabs that would be all that is necessary."³⁷

How exactly Weizmann wanted the government "to settle this thing with the Arabs" was revealed in another letter he wrote to his wife on May 20. Following his meeting the previous day with Allenby, Weizmann suggested to his wife that the British were trying to adopt a balanced approach and to deal with the Jews and the Arabs equally. Such an approach, he argued, could not work with the Arabs, who needed the use of the whip: "The local English administration is *de facto* preserving the Turkish machine . . . The Turk ruled with sword and fire and kept the *Arab trash* in submission. The Jews were then the predominant element." Weizmann then complained about how British weakness had resulted in an intolerable situation: "Arabs and Syrians – our enemy – crowd all the offices and *de facto* rule the land."³⁸

Weizmann seems to have shared the views of many of his European contemporaries with regard to the inequality of the races. Just as he believed that the British should not treat the Palestinian '*Arab trash*' on equal terms with the Jews, he supported his friend General Jan Smuts' system in South Africa. Neither Weizmann nor Smuts, who enjoyed a 30-year mutual friendship, could see anything wrong with their respective approaches to the indigenous peoples of Palestine and South Africa. "In both cases," Richard Stevens observed, "Smuts and Weizmann symbolized the Western civilization's ability to rationalize domination, exploitation, conquest and control as a civilizing Christian mission or the fulfilment of Judeo-Christian vocation."³⁹

Weizmann wrote to Balfour, on May 30, 1918, setting forth his real views about the Arabs in what turned out to be tantamount to a crucial Zionist policy statement: "The British authorities . . . knowing as they do the treacherous nature of the Arab, have to watch carefully and constantly that nothing should happen which might give the Arabs the slightest grievance or ground for complaint . . . The Arab . . . screams as often as he can and blackmails as much as he can . . . The first scream was heard when your Balfour Declaration was announced . . . The fairer

the English regime [in Palestine] tries to be, the more arrogant the Arab becomes. It must also be taken into consideration that the Arab official . . . has a great advantage over the fair and clean-minded English official, who is not conversant with the subtleties and subterfuges of the Oriental mind.”⁴⁰

Weizmann then came to the point he wanted to make, ie. the imperative need for the Zionist Commission to receive preferential treatment at the expense of the Arab majority in Palestine, and the concomitant need not to worry about violating Arab rights: “The present state of affairs would necessarily tend toward the creation of an Arab Palestine, if there were an Arab people in Palestine. It will not in fact produce that result because the fellah is at least four centuries behind the times, and the effendi (who by the way is the real gainer from the present system) is dishonest, uneducated, greedy and as unpatriotic as he is inefficient.”⁴¹

The importance of this letter should not be underestimated in its revelations about Weizmann’s and the Zionists’ approach to the Palestinian Arabs, who after all represented the major stumbling block to the ‘organization’ of the task of taking over Palestine. Zionist historian Jon Kimche recognized that: “This extraordinary letter became in its own way a basic state paper on the Zionist attitude towards the Arab problem; it dominated Zionist thinking and policy for the next half-century with all the complexities and contradictions of Weizmann’s initial formulations.”⁴²

“We should be treated as . . . the future masters of Palestine”

In another letter which he sent to his wife in July, Weizmann sounded alarmed and went to great lengths to emphasize: “Instructions must be sent to Allenby that they must open the road for us here; that the Jewish population of Palestine cannot be classed, in the eyes of Administration, on the same level as the Arabs . . . otherwise it will be bad for us . . . instructions in principle that the way should be opened for us in Palestine, and that we should be treated as the founders of the Jewish National Home, and *the future masters of Palestine*. Allenby is only waiting for that. He has read my letter to Balfour and agrees with it. Men and Money!”⁴³

The essence of the Zionist project “to take over” Palestine necessarily entailed depriving the Palestinians of their rights to self-determination

and independence in their own country. The immorality of the project to subjugate the people of Palestine incensed the many liberal-minded anti-Zionist Jews. Thus, Mayer Sulzberger, one of the leaders of the American Jewish Committee during World War I, based his opposition on the following grounds: "Democracy . . . means that those who live in a country shall select their rulers and shall preserve their powers. Given these principles a Convention of Zionists looking to the government of people who are in Palestine would be in contravention of the plainest principle of democracy. It can have no practical meaning unless its intent is to overpower the people who are in Palestine and to deprive them of the right of self-government by substituting the will of persons outside, who may or may not ever see Palestine."⁴⁴

Feisal Meets Weizmann

The magnitude of the victory of the Allies in World War I seemed to them to usher in a new world, the mastery of which was incontestably theirs, and theirs alone. Their vision for the post-war world order was enveloped in the ideals by which they claimed to have fought the war. Their plans were different. On November 18, 1918, after the armistice had been signed, Lord Curzon's biographer observed: "no victory has ever been so wide, so overwhelming, so unquestioned. We possessed physical supremacy such as had never been known since the days of Harian or Alexander. We seemed the masters of the World." But as Bowle observed, this overwhelming victory did not usher in the new world order in the name of which Wilson and the Allies claimed to be fighting the war. With the victory, "the old order seemed re-established".⁴⁵

Prince Feisal travelled to Europe to address the Peace Conference in Paris. In London, where he was warmly received, he was constantly pressed to make commitments and concessions he could not understand. His English was non-existent and he had to rely for translation on T. E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) whose Arabic, although it sounded fluent was – as Lawrence himself put it – a "perpetual adventure". Feisal was eventually led to the Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann who pressed him for some form of acquiescence to Zionist plans for the development of a national Jewish home in Palestine. Feisal understood this to mean, as his father Sharif Hussein had, that the Jews would be lodgers in the Arab house. The Zionist leader assured the Arab prince that the Zionists had

no intention of establishing a Jewish government in Palestine, and that all they wished to do was to help in the development of the country without prejudice to the interests of the Arab majority.

Feisal believed these assurances and agreed to sign an agreement with Weizmann to that effect. Zionist historian Jon Kimche observed that Feisal made it clear to Weizmann and his colleagues that any agreement between them was based on “the assumption that Palestine would be an Arab state which would allow the Jewish home to be developed and given a special status within the Arab state”.⁴⁶

On January 3, 1919, Prince Feisal and Chaim Weizmann signed an agreement to this effect. Prince Feisal agreed to Jewish immigration to Palestine subject to the protection of the rights of the Arab people of Palestine. The whole Feisal–Weizmann agreement, as Mark Sykes himself reported, was made conditional by a proviso, which Feisal added and which was signed by both men. The proviso stipulated that “Provided the Arabs shall obtain their independence as demanded . . . I shall concur in the above articles. But if the slightest modification or departure were to be made, I shall not then be bound by a single word of the present agreement.”⁴⁷

Since the Peace Conference did not in any way address Arab demands for independence in Syria, the Weizmann–Feisal document lost whatever value it might have had. And this despite Weizmann’s attempt to draw capital out of it seventeen years later when he published it in *The Times* in 1936.

“The Arab population is nigh forgotten and is to be ignored”

The British government naturally enough knew that their own designs on Palestine and their support of the Zionist project clashed with their earlier pledges to their Arab allies, particularly since the government knew of the far-reaching Zionist ambitions for Palestine. Meeting with the Eastern Committee in December 1918, Lord Curzon, chairing with Balfour and with other colonial and Foreign Office officials present, reviewed the 1915 agreement with the Arabs, the 1916 secret agreement with France and Russia, and the Balfour Declaration and concluded: “The Palestine Question is this. If we deal with our commitments, there is first the general pledge to Hussein in October 1915, under which Palestine was included in the areas to which Great Britain pledged itself that they should be Arab and independent in the future . . . Now with regard

to the facts . . . The Zionist declaration of our Government has been followed by a very considerable immigration of Jews . . . (The Zionist) programme is expanding from day to day. They now talk about a Jewish State. The Arab population is nigh forgotten and is to be ignored. They (The Zionists) not only claim the boundaries of the old Palestine, but they claim to spread across the Jordan into the rich countries lying to the east, and, indeed, there seems to be very small limit to the aspirations which they now form.”⁴⁸

By that time, Iraq was already under British military administration. Syria had been divided into three administrative zones: Palestine in the south under British military rule; the Syrian interior under Arab rule; and Lebanon and the Syrian coast under French military rule. When Prince Feisal protested against these divisions, which appeared to hinder rather than support the objective of Arab unity and independence, the British argued that these divisions and foreign military rules were only temporary arrangements and a matter of administrative convenience. They reassured Feisal that they were committed to honouring their pledges and to the principle of self-determination.

The Paris Peace Conference

The British came to the Paris Peace Conference vaguely disposed, with some reservations, to publicly endorse President Wilson’s Fourteen Point Plan and particularly the principle of self-determination. They frankly acknowledged that their secret agreements were contrary to the Wilsonian spirit of self-determination. They were able to repudiate their previous commitments with regard to Constantinople and the Black Sea Straits because the beneficiary, the Czarist government of Russia, had been overthrown by the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. They could not repudiate their secret commitment to the French with regard to Syria.

Balfour was determined to be, and act as, the master when it came to the future of the Middle East, which he intended to control along with the French. Neither France nor Britain, he wrote, “wants much less than supreme economic and political control, to be exercised no doubt (at least in our case) in friendly and unostentatious co-operation with the Arabs,” he then added, “but nevertheless, in the last resort, to be exercised”.⁴⁹

In other words, Balfour expected that the Arabs must cooperate in their own subjugation so that Britain and France would have “supreme economic and political control”. But if they did not, France and England will use other means to ensure that this “supreme economic and political control” is “in the last resort, to be exercised”. On the question of Arab independence, he doubted that any state “can be described as really independent which has habitually and normally to follow foreign advice supported, if the worst comes to the worst, by troops, aeroplanes and tanks”. Clearly stated, the imperial policy was to seek cooperation of the Arab majority in accepting “foreign advice” for the purpose of granting the imperial powers economic and political control in the region. Should cooperation of the Arabs not be forthcoming, then the Arabs would be made to accept “foreign advice” by “troops, aeroplanes and tanks”.⁵⁰

The French came to the Peace Conference determined to demand the implementation of their secret agreements with the British and to press for their “incontestable rights” to safeguards in Syria, Lebanon, Cilicia and Palestine.

For Prince Feisal, who came to demand independence for the Arabs, the obstacles were insurmountable, given the collusion of Zionist and imperial interests and designs against Arab independence. Thus, Feisal was subjected to pressure by both the Zionists and the British to postpone Arab demands for an independent Palestine. They made him believe that this was the only way to get a positive hearing as well as British support for Arab rights in northern Syria. French troops were already occupying Beirut and the northern coastal regions of Syria and were clearly hostile to the Arab government in Damascus. The French threat to Arab rights to independence seemed more immediate and more ominous than the Zionist threat to Arab Palestine. Feisal was, therefore, reluctantly disposed to discuss the situation in Palestine at a further date.

Arabs Demand Independence at the Peace Conference

However, on January 29, 1919 Feisal addressed the Peace Conference and forcefully stated: “I have come to ask that the Arabic speaking peoples of Asia, from the lines of Alexandretta-Diarbek southward to the Indian Ocean, be recognized as independent sovereign peoples, under the guarantee of the League of Nations . . . I base my request on the principles enunciated by President Wilson (attached) and am confident

that the Powers will attach more importance to the bodies and souls of the Arabic-speaking peoples than to their own material interests.”⁵¹

Feisal knew what independence granted by European powers would mean. It would mean “the introduction of ‘capitulations’ and extra-territorial privileges, legal and commercial, for foreigners; would entail protection, by foreigners, of the Syrian Christians; would bring about the granting of foreign concessions, and, in the train of such grants, corruptions and intrigues innumerable. This was not inviting, but, even so, Feisal insisted that the Syrians would prefer all this to the establishment of a mandate.”⁵²

But Feisal’s hopes and faith in the great powers were misplaced. The imperial powers were bent on pursuing their imperial designs with little regard for the “bodies and souls of the Arabic speaking people”. The day after Feisal spoke to the Peace Conference, that is on January 30, 1919, the division of Syria between England and France was tacitly agreed upon, and the Zionists had arranged the form of mandate Britain was to have in Palestine.

Conscious of British imperial use of the Zionists in the name of humanitarian ideals, the Arabs addressed this argument with a proposal based on compromise and acceptance of the notion that Palestine could be a haven for Jewish refugees. On February 13, Checkri Gamen, Chief Representative of the Central Syrian Committee, made a presentation before the Conference of Ten. It is significant to note the compromise solution and the spirit of tolerance contained in that proposal: “Palestine is incontestably the Southern portion of our country. The Zionists claim it. We have suffered too much from sufferings resembling theirs, not to throw open wide to them the doors of Palestine. All those among them who are oppressed in certain retrograde countries are welcome. Let them settle in Palestine, but in an autonomous Palestine, connected with Syria by the sole bond of federation. Will not a Palestine enjoying wide internal autonomy be for them a sufficient guarantee? If they form a majority there, they will be the rulers. If they are in the minority, they will be represented in the government in proportion to their numbers.”⁵³

Exposing Zionist Goals

The Zionists would have no such thing as Arab independence or a Jewish position in Palestine subordinate to the Arab majority. On February 27,

1919, the Zionist delegation addressed the Peace Conference. Weizmann presented the Zionists' programme. He requested that sovereign possession of Palestine be vested in the League of Nations and Great Britain as mandatory power. The task of the mandatory power, he demanded, should be to place Palestine "under such political, administrative, and economic conditions as will secure the establishment there of the Jewish National Home . . .".⁵⁴

When American Secretary of State Robert Lansing interjected to ask what, in fact, was meant by "National Home" Weizmann threw caution to the wind. He spoke frankly, spelling out the true aim of his movement. He defined the Jewish National Home in Palestine as a project to make "Palestine as Jewish as England is English". To soften the impact of the statement, he proceeded to compare the Zionist venture with French colonialism in North Africa: "I gave a brief technical exposition of the point", Weizmann wrote, "and took as my example the outstanding success which the French had at that time made of Tunisia. What the French could do in Tunisia, I said, the Jews would be able to do in Palestine, with Jewish will, Jewish money, Jewish power and Jewish enthusiasm."⁵⁵

In an interview with *The Times* published March 1, 1919, he repeated the statements made to the Paris Peace Conference, but preceded them with the usual deceptive reassurance: "We do not", he said, "aspire to found a Zionist State. What we want is a country in which all nations and all creeds shall have equal rights and equal tolerance . . . By the establishment of a Jewish National Home we mean the creation of such conditions in Palestine today . . . so that the country may become as quickly as possible as Jewish as England is English . . . non-Jews need not fear that they will suffer at our hands. For two thousand years, we have known what it means to be strangers. We Jews know the heart of the stranger: are we likely to deal out oppression? Moreover, we have never proposed that a Jewish minority should rule over the rest. Palestine will only become a Jewish self-governing commonwealth when the majority of its inhabitants are Jewish."⁵⁶

It seemed not to occur to Weizmann that the Arab majority in Palestine might object to the project of transforming Palestine into a Jewish country, but as Lord Curzon had noted, it seemed that the Arabs, and their wishes and aspirations, were to be forgotten and ignored.

This explains the temerity of the demands made by the Zionists at the Peace Conference. Chaim Weizmann summed up both the Zionist

demands and the strategy at the Peace Conference in the following way: the Zionists demands were that “the whole administration of Palestine shall be so formed as to make of Palestine a Jewish Commonwealth under British trusteeship, and that the Jews shall so participate in the administration as to secure this object”. Furthermore, “The Jewish population is to be allowed the widest practicable measure of self-government and to have extensive powers of expropriating the owners of the soil.”⁵⁷ The Zionist delegation proposed boundaries for the Jewish Commonwealth, which included parts of Lebanon, Syria, the whole of Transjordan and most of the Egyptian Sinai.

The Zionists wanted considerably more territories than British Prime Minister Lloyd George’s biblical formula “from Dan to Beersheba” suggested. It had been on the basis of Lloyd George’s biblical notion about Palestine that boundaries were proposed for the Jewish National Home. Foreign Office aides used Sir George Adam Smith’s atlas of Palestine in the time of David and Solomon circa 1,000 BC as the basis for, as a British historian put it, “the geographical, the physical, and the political obliteration of the Arabs who now inhabited that area nearly three thousand years later. There was a very awkward moment during this surely utterly fantastic scene in Paris, when [French leader] Clemenceau asked Lloyd George to show him where Dan was on the map – and Lloyd George was unable to.”⁵⁸

Warnings Against the Zionists’ True Aims in Palestine

Lord Curzon wrote to Balfour warning him: “I feel tolerably sure therefore that while Weizmann may say one thing to you, or while you may mean one thing by a National Home, he is out for something quite different. He contemplates a Jewish State, a Jewish nation, a subordinate population of Arabs etc, ruled by Jews; the Jews in possession of the fat of the land, and directing the administration. He is trying to affect this behind the scene and under the shelter of British trusteeship.”⁵⁹

Herbert Adams Gibbons, writing in 1919, recognized what the Zionist project implied for the people of Palestine, the method required for its implementation and its inherent negation of the principles for which the Allied Powers said they were fighting the war. “If the peace conference decides to restore the Jews to Palestine,” he wrote, “immigration into and development of the country can be assured only by the presence

of a considerable army for an indefinite period. Not only the half million Moslems living in Palestine, but the millions in surrounding countries, will have to be cowed into submission by the constant show and the occasional use of force. But how can we reconcile such a policy in Palestine with the principles for the worldwide maintenance of which we have announced that we are fighting? Is the peace conference to give with one hand and take away with the other? We have made the issues of this conflict the triumph of right over force and the liberation of small nations from the yoke of the foreigner. Each race is to be consulted in regard to its own destinies. If we consult the Palestinian Arabs, Christians as well as Moslem, we shall find them unanimous in their desire, their determination, not to have Zionism foisted upon them.”⁶⁰

Prince Feisal was irritated by Weizmann’s account of Zionist intentions in Palestine, which he felt was deliberately hidden from him when he signed his agreement in London with the Zionist leader. He requested that the conference send a commission of inquiry to the region to ascertain the wishes of the population.

At the same time, the American Commission at the Peace Conference was flooded with anti-Zionist memoranda from all over the world including from Jews in Palestine. Professor W. L. Westermann, Head of the Western Asia Intelligence Section of the American Commission, wrote a series of memoranda to William Bullit, head of the Intelligence Reports Section of the American Commission. Westermann pointed out to Bullit that Zionism was “a flagrant violation of the rights of self-determination as proclaimed by the British and the French in the Near East on November 8, 1918”. Westermann also pointed out that the British and the French “despite all their promises and in contradiction of point twelve of the Wilsonian theses . . . were still proceeding in terms of the secret Sykes–Picot agreement . . .”⁶¹

Westermann therefore recommended that the Sykes–Picot agreement be scrapped. He also recommended the conference follow the advice of Dr Howard Bliss, President of the American University in Cairo, to appoint a commission, which would go to Syria and determine what the desires of the people really were.

Dr Bliss came to Paris and wrote to President Wilson impressing on him “how earnestly and even passionately the people of Syria” were dependent on his Point 12 and on the Anglo-French Declaration of November 1918 (which reassured the Arabs of Anglo-French intentions

to support their independence). He pointed out how the people of Syria wanted “a fair opportunity to express their own political aspirations”.⁶² Dr Bliss then expressed his strong support for the idea of an international Commission of Inquiry to be sent to the region to ascertain the wishes of the people.

Dr Bliss eventually appeared before the Council of Ten at the Peace Conference, in February, and made a forceful presentation in favour of the sending of a Commission of Inquiry.

On March 20, 1919 the historic meeting of the Council of Four (between the USA, Britain, France and Italy) took place. At this meeting President Wilson upset all the Anglo-French imperial calculations based on their secret divisions of the Middle East – at least temporarily. He bluntly told the British and the French who were talking about the Sykes–Picot arrangements, that he did not recognize their secret understandings for the Middle East. “One of the fundamental principles to which the United States adheres is the consent of the governed. From the point of view of the United States of America”, he said, “the only idea is whether France will be agreeable to the Syrians. The same applies to Great Britain, whether she will be agreeable to the inhabitants of Mesopotamia. The only way to deal with the question is to discover the desires of the populations of the regions.”⁶³

Wilson then reportedly added that the only “scientific basis possible for a settlement” was to send a Commission to Syria to establish what the people really wanted. The Council of Four accordingly drafted instructions for the Commissioners on the basis of the principle of self-determination and omitted any special status for the Jews in Palestine. Although publicly supportive, Great Britain, France, (and the Zionists of course), lobbied against the proposal out of fear of being confronted with “recommendations from their own appointed delegates which might conflict with their policies”.⁶⁴

British Admission of Duplicity and Betrayal

In a letter Balfour wrote to Herbert Samuel (the leading supporter of Zionism in the British Cabinet) from Paris, he expressed the British attitude to the Commission of Inquiry, which the Peace Conference was proposing to send to the region. He said: “I have great hopes that Palestine will be eliminated from the scope of any Commission.”

Balfour then expressed “considerable anxiety” about Zionist behaviour in Palestine “which is alienating the sympathies of all the other elements of the population” and urged Samuel to “warn the Zionist leaders both here and in Palestine that they would do well to avoid any appearance of unauthorized interference in the administration of the country”⁶⁵ in the interest of Zionism whose cause “you have so much at heart”.

Balfour was, of course, not so much concerned about the impact of the Zionists’ behaviour in Palestine on the Arab majority of Palestine, but rather on how that behaviour was adversely affecting the perception of the British administration in Palestine of the Zionists and their true intentions. He was also concerned that it would be difficult to keep the commissioners from finding out the truth about Zionist plans of conquest. But Balfour had no moral compunctions about the notion of denying the inhabitants of Palestine their legitimate rights of self-government, nor about betraying British agreements with, and repeated reassurances to, the Arabs about upholding their rights to independence.

That is because Balfour quite openly held racist views about the superiority of the white man, which allowed him to rationalize imperial domination and the subjugation of the other races. During the debate on the proposed Union of South Africa, he suggested that the European races had greater rights and privileges than other races. He argued that granting equal rights to indigenous peoples would “threaten the fabric of the White man’s civilization”.⁶⁶

He was therefore ready to be quite open about British imperial machinations and duplicity in Palestine for the sake of advancing the “White man’s civilization”. Consequently, he explained to Prime Minister Lloyd George on February 19, 1919, that: “The weak point of our position of course is that in the case of Palestine we *deliberately and rightly* decline to accept the principle of self-determination.”⁶⁷

He would later confess to Lord Curzon in a correspondence dated August 11, 1919: “The Four Great Powers are committed to Zionism . . . What I have never been able to understand is how it can be harmonized with the declaration [Anglo-French of November 1918], the Covenant [of the League of Nations], or the instructions to the Commission of Inquiry . . . In short, so far as Palestine is concerned, the Powers have made no statement of fact which is not admittedly wrong, and no declaration of policy which, at least in the letter, they have not always intended to violate.”⁶⁸

George Kidston, of the British Foreign Office, minutes on Balfour's memorandum note: "Palestine is to go to the Zionists irrespective of the wishes of the great bulk of the population . . . The idea that the carrying out of either of these programmes (French mandate over Syria and Zionist designs over Palestine) will entail bloodshed and military repression never seems to have occurred to him (Balfour)."⁶⁹

NOTES

- 1 See the various documents in Doreen Ingrams, *Palestine Papers 1917–1922: Seeds of Conflict* (New York: George Braziller, 1973), pp. 7–18.
- 2 Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error: The Autobiography of Chaim Weizmann* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), p. 207.
- 3 Paul Goodman (ed.), *Chaim Weizmann: A Tribute on his Seventieth Birthday* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1945), p. 199.
- 4 Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, op. cit., p. 242.
- 5 Quoted in Hans Kohn, "Zion and the Jewish National Idea", in Alan R. Taylor and Richard N. Tetlie, *Palestine: A Search for Truth: Approaches to the Arab–Israeli Conflict* (Washington, D. C.: Public Affairs Press, 1970), pp. 22–54, p. 45.
- 6 Leon Simon and Leonard Stein (eds.), *Awakening Palestine* (London: John Murray, 1923), p. 235.
- 7 W. T. Mallison, Jr., "The Balfour Declaration: An Appraisal in International Law", in Ibrahim Abu-Lughod (ed.) *The Transformation of Palestine* (Evanston: Northwest University Press, 1971), pp. 61–111, p. 94.
- 8 J. M. N. Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality* (Westport, Conn.: Hyperion Press, 1976), pp. 177–78. See also J. M. N. Jeffries, *The Balfour Declaration* (Beirut: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 1969), p. 11.
- 9 Ibid., p. 11.
- 10 Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality*, op. cit., p. 181 and Jeffries, *The Balfour Declaration*, op. cit., p. 15.
- 11 Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality*, op. cit., p. 184, and Jeffries, *The Balfour Declaration*, op. cit., p. 19. (Author's italics.)
- 12 Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality*, op. cit., p. 201.
- 13 John Marlowe, *The Seat of Pilate: An Account of the Palestine Mandate* (London: The Cresset Press), pp. 27–28.
- 14 Quoted in Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality*, op. cit., p. 215
- 15 The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Information Department Papers No. 20a. "Great Britain and Palestine 1915–1939" (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 116. See also David Lloyd George, *The Truth About the Peace Treaties* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1938), pp. 1131–41.
- 16 The Royal Institute of International Affairs. "Great Britain and Palestine", op. cit., p. 8.
- 17 Lloyd George, *The Truth About the Peace Treaties*, op. cit., p. 1037.

- 18 Quoted in Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality*, op. cit., p. 216
- 19 George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1965), p. 271.
- 20 The Royal Institute of International Affairs, "Great Britain and Palestine", op. cit, p. 117.
- 21 R. S. Baker and W. E. Dodd, *The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson* (New York: Harpers, 1927), vol. III, pp. 160–161. See also Herbert Hoover, *The Ordeal of Woodrow Wilson* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co, 1958), pp. 22–23.
- 22 A. P. Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies* (London: Macmillan, 1963), p. 158.
- 23 Hoover, *The Ordeal of Woodrow Wilson*, op. cit., p. 23.
- 24 Ibid., p. 24.
- 25 Ibid., p. 25.
- 26 Ibid., p. 27.
- 27 Ibid., p. 73.
- 28 The Royal Institute of International Affairs, "Great Britain and Palestine", op. cit., p. 118. See also Lloyd George, *The Truth About the Peace Treaties*, op. cit., p. 1036.
- 29 Jon Kimche, *There Could Have Been Peace* (New York: The Dial Press, 1973), p. 180.
- 30 Ibid., p. 181.
- 31 Nevill Barbour, *Nisi Dominus: A Survey of the Palestine Controversy* (London: George G. Harap, Co, 1946), p. 70.
- 32 Kimche, *There Could Have Been Peace*, op. cit., p. 165.
- 33 Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality*, op. cit., p. 221.
- 34 Ibid., p. 222.
- 35 Kimche, *There Could Have Been Peace*, op. cit., p. 144.
- 36 Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality*, op. cit., p. 228.
- 37 Kimche, *There Could Have Been Peace*, op. cit., p. 145.
- 38 Ibid., p. 145.
- 39 Richard P. Stevens, *Weizmann et Smuts: étude de la coopération entre l'Afrique du sud et le sionisme* (Beyrouth: Institut des études Palestiniennes, 1976), p. xii.
- 40 Kimche, *There Could Have Been Peace*, op. cit., p. 150.
- 41 Ibid., p. 150.
- 42 Ibid., p. 150.
- 43 Ibid., p. 155.
- 44 Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality* op. cit., p. 153.
- 45 John Bowle, *The Imperial Achievement: The Rise and Transformation of the British Empire* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1974), p. 407.
- 46 Kimche, *There Could Have Been Peace*, op. cit., p. 176.
- 47 Christopher Sykes, *Crossroads to Israel* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1965), p. 32.
- 48 Ingrams, *Palestine Papers*, op. cit., pp. 49–50.
- 49 Quoted in Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies*, op. cit., p. 169
- 50 Ibid., p. 168.
- 51 David Hunter Miller, "My Diary at the Conference of Paris, vol. IV", in Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, op. cit., pp. 286–87.
- 52 Thornton, *The Imperial Idea*, op. cit., p. 169.

- 53 Frank E. Manuel, *The Realities of American–Palestine Relations* (Washington D. C.: Public Affairs Press, 1949), pp. 228–29.
- 54 Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, op. cit., p. 244.
- 55 Ibid., p. 244.
- 56 Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality*, op. cit., p. 267.
- 57 Ingrams, *Palestine Papers*, op. cit., p. 58
- 58 Erskine Childers, writing in the jubilee volume of the Netherlands–Arabia Association 1955–66 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), quoted in Grollemberg Lucas (translated from the German by John Bowden), *Palestine First* (London: SCM Press, 1980), p. 32.
- 59 Ingrams, *Palestine Papers*, op. cit., p. 58.
- 60 Herbert Adams Gibbons, *Zionism and World Peace* (Paris. The Friends of the Holy Land, 1919), p. 374.
- 61 Manuel, *The Realities of American–Palestine Relations*, op. cit., p. 223.
- 62 Harry N. Howard, *The King–Crane Commission: An American Inquiry in the Middle East* (Beirut: Khayat's, 1963), pp. 24–25.
- 63 Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality*, op. cit., p. 272.
- 64 Anthony Nutting, *The Arabs: A Narrative History from Mohammed to the Present* (New York: Mentor, 1965), p. 299.
- 65 Ingrams, *Palestine Papers*, op. cit., p. 66.
- 66 Thornton, *The Imperial Idea*, op. cit., p. 159.
- 67 Ingrams, *Palestine Papers*, op. cit., p. 61.
- 68 E. L. Woodward and R. Butler (eds.), *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919–1939*, First Series, IV (London: HMSO, 1952). See also Ingrams, *Palestine Papers*, op. cit., p. 73.
- 69 Ingrams, *Palestine Papers*, op. cit., p. 74.

3

Lead up to the British Mandate, 1919–1921

The King–Crane Commission

Although French Premier Clemenceau was opposed to the idea and British Prime Minister Lloyd George procrastinated, US President Wilson held his ground and insisted on sending a Commission to the Middle East. The Commission finally left without the French or the British delegates. Dr Henry King, President of Oberlin College, and Mr Charles Crane, a Chicago businessman, headed the American delegation. The Commission arrived at Jaffa in Palestine on June 10, 1919, and remained in the region until July 21. It visited 40 towns, interviewed hundreds of delegations and received 1,800 petitions.

The largest number of petitions received by the Commission called overwhelmingly for a United Syria (that is a Syria from which Palestine would not be separated); the second largest number of petitions strongly favoured ‘absolute independence’; and the third largest number of petitions emphatically opposed the Zionist programme in Palestine. Despite the obstructionism of the French occupation authorities in Syria, the Commission was able to determine that a majority of Syrians were “against a French mandate in any circumstances”. Opposition to France stemmed from Arab knowledge of French colonial rule in North Africa and from the tendency of the French occupational authorities in Syria “to favor the Catholics especially, a policy which stimulated religious divisions in the country, endangering the possibility of Syrian nationalism on a non-religious basis.”¹

The General Syrian Congress of July 1919

Following elections held in all three administrative zones of Syria (divided by the secret Anglo–French Sykes–Picot agreement), a General Syrian Congress met in Damascus on July 2, 1919 and unanimously adopted a historic resolution, the main articles of which stated:

1. We ask absolutely complete political independence for Syria . . .
2. We ask that the Government of this Syrian country should be a democratic civil constitutional monarchy on broad decentralization principles, safeguarding the rights of minorities, and that the King be the Emir Feisal . . .
3. . . . we protest against Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, placing us among the nations in their middle stage of development which stand in need of a Mandatory Power.
4. . . . we, relying on the declarations of President Wilson that his object in waging war was to put an end to the ambitions of conquest and colonization, can only regard the Mandate mentioned in the Covenant of the League of Nations as equivalent to the rendering of economic and technical assistance that does not prejudice our complete independence . . . we will seek the technical and economic assistance from the United State of America, provided that such assistance does not exceed twenty years.
5. In the event of America not finding herself in a position to accept our desire for assistance, we will seek this assistance from Great Britain, also provided that such assistance does not infringe the complete independence and unity of our country . . .
6. We do not recognize any right claimed by the French government in any part whatsoever over our Syrian country and refuse that she should assist us or have a hand in our country under any circumstances and in any place.
7. We oppose the pretensions of the Zionists to create a Jewish Commonwealth in the southern part of Syria, known as Palestine, and oppose Zionist migration to any part of our country, for we do not acknowledge their title, but consider them a grave peril to our people from the national, economical, and political points of view. Our Jewish compatriots shall enjoy our common rights and assume the common responsibilities . . .

We also have the fullest confidence that the Peace Conference will realize that we would not have risen against the Turks, with whom we had participated in all civil, political and representative privileges, but for their violation of our national rights, and so will grant us our desires in full in order that our political rights

may not be less after the war than they were before . . .
We request to be allowed to send a delegation to represent us
at the Peace Conference to defend our rights and to secure the
realization of our aspirations.²

The resolution clearly reflected a politically mature community of people determined to take their economic and political destinies into their own hands and to assume their place in a new community of nations. The program also reflected the faith the Arab people had that the new public order would no longer be based on secret treaties of conquest and colonialism, but on the principles of self-determination and sovereign equality of nations.

The Syrians had been aware of Feisal's difficulties in Paris, and their request to send a delegation to the Peace Conference was an indication of this, but also of their determination to speak for themselves. The programme was clearly drawn up by men far from being "not able to stand by themselves" and in need of forced administrative assistance, as the peace makers in Paris insisted on labelling them. The first copy of the complete 'Damascus Programme' was delivered to the King–Crane Commission. The Commissioners commented: "It is the most substantial document presented to the Commission and deserves to be treated with great respect" and observed that "there can be no doubt that the main elements of this programme represent the popular will as nearly as can be expressed in any country."³

But Britain and France had other plans, which did not include the popular will in Syria and Mesopotamia. In an answer to a leading question from Ormsby-Gore who, like his Zionist friends, was anxious to get Britain to repudiate the Syrian declaration of independence, Prime Minister Lloyd George told the House of Commons on March 18:

It appears that the Emir Feisal was proclaimed King of Syria, including apparently Palestine and Syria, by a Congress at Damascus on March 8th, but of whom this Congress was composed or what authority it possessed is not yet known. As it is obvious that the future of the territories which have been conquered from the former Ottoman Empire can only properly be determined by the Allied Powers assembled in conference for the purpose, the Emir Feisal has been informed by the British and French Governments, acting in concert, that they cannot recognize the validity of the proceedings . . .⁴

The King–Crane Commission Report

While the final report of the King–Crane Commission was being drafted, Mr Crane cabled President Wilson on August 30, giving him a summary of the Commission's conclusion: "We are recommending for Syria first that whatever administration go in be a true mandatory under League of Nations; second that Syria including Palestine and Lebanon be kept a unity according to the desires of the great majority; third that Syria be under a single mandate; fourth that Emir Feisal be King of the new Syria State; fifth that the extreme Zionist program be seriously modified; sixth that America be asked to take the single mandate for Syria; seventh that if for any reason America does not take the mandate then it be given to Great Britain."⁵

The Commission's final report was deposited with the American delegation at the Peace Conference and a copy was sent to President Wilson in Washington.

The value of the report resides not only in the fact that it represents an objective summary of the feelings and wishes of the people, ascertained by a body of independent commissioners on behalf of the Peace Conference, but also in the fact that these commissioners had no national objectives to promote. The King–Crane Commission may indeed have been "one of the first and most unusual attempts to ascertain the wishes of a people in an effort to accord them justice".⁶

With regard to Palestine and the Zionist program, the King–Crane Report recommended that "the unity of Syria be preserved, in accordance with the earnest petition of the great majority of the people of Syria . . . (And) that Emir Feisal be made head of the new united Syrian State." The Commissioners went on to recommend "serious modification of the extreme Zionist programme for Palestine of unlimited immigration of Jews, looking finally to making Palestine distinctly a Jewish state."⁷

With regard to the Zionist program the report emphasized that "the Commissioners began their study of Zionism with minds predisposed in its favour, but the actual facts in Palestine, coupled with the force of the general principles proclaimed by the Allies and accepted by the Syrians have driven them to the recommendation here made . . . The fact repeatedly came out in the Commission's conferences with Jewish representatives, that the Zionists looked forward to a practically complete dispossession of the present non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine."⁸

Repeating President Wilson's July 4 commitment to the principle of self-determination, the Commissioners wrote: "If that principle is to rule, and so the wishes of Palestine's population are to be decisive as to what is to be done with Palestine, then it is to be remembered that the non-Jewish population of Palestine – nearly nine-tenths of the whole – are emphatically against the Zionist programme . . . No British officer consulted by the Commissioners, believed that the Zionist programme could be carried out except by force . . . That of itself is evidence of the strong sense of the injustice of the Zionist programme."⁹

Suppressing the King–Crane Commission Report

British Prime Minister David Lloyd George had told the Peace Conference before the Commission left Paris that "The British Government was quite willing to agree to a similar investigation into the wishes of the people of Mesopotamia and Palestine. I formally declared at the Conference that 'I was quite willing to abide by the decision of the inhabitants as interpreted by the Commission.'"¹⁰

But clearly the King–Crane Report's recommendations ran counter to the imperial designs of Britain and France and to the Zionists' designs on Palestine. The King–Crane report was sent to the State Department which, according to Dr King, "seem to have adopted the policy of not giving anyone access to it".¹¹

Zionist pressure, according to Mr Crane, was responsible for the failure of the American government to publish the King–Crane Commission Report. The report would eventually be released by Dr King to Stannard Baker who used excerpts of it in his work *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement*, which appeared in 1922. But it was too late for the report to have anywhere near the impact it could have had if it had not been suppressed in 1919.

The US Senate had rejected President Wilson's cherished League of Nations Treaty in March 1920. President Wilson himself had been defeated in the 1920 election, and his administration replaced by the Republican administration of President Harding, who made it clear that the United States would have no involvement in European affairs or in the League of Nations. There was no chance that under these changed circumstances the King–Crane Commission Report recommendations could have any practical impact on the settlement now being imposed

on the Middle East. The secret imperial agreement of Sykes–Picot dividing the Middle East between England and France had prevailed over the noble declarations of self-determination and government on the basis of the consent of the governed.

The editor and publisher who printed the complete text of the King–Crane Commission Report on December 2, 1922, described it as “one of the great suppressed documents of the peace-making period”, and noted that the text and recommendations made clear “why the Report should have been rigorously concealed by a then spineless State Department”.¹²

This left England and France free to ignore self-determination for the Arabs and to impose their imperial designs on the region, which included the Zionist program.

Proclamation of Syrian Independence, March 1920

In January 1920, Prince Feisal returned to Damascus after an absence of seven months. He found the general mood to be one of suspicion of the Allies’ delays and failure to act on promises and pledges made to the Arabs. His long absence, his tendency to allow the British and the Zionists to draw him into uncharted waters and his apparent willingness to postpone Syrian independence while negotiating its prior approval with the Allies displeased his supporters.

These supporters, like Feisal’s own father Sharif Hussein, were determined not to do anything that might compromise the independence of Syria. Feisal had no choice but to go along with the popular drive for an immediate proclamation of independence. Consequently, the General Syrian Congress met in Damascus and proclaimed, on March 8, 1920, the independence of Syria, including Palestine and Lebanon, as a sovereign state and a constitutional monarchy with Prince Feisal as King. Lebanon was granted a special autonomous status.

King Feisal told Joseph Jeffries shortly after being proclaimed King of Syria: “Long ago the Allies promised us an independent Arab State where we have proclaimed it. But what immediately forced Congress to take the step of proclamation was the never-ending delay of the Peace Conference in coming to a decision concerning us. The Arab people have waited a very long time, and during this delay, all kinds of contradictory reports have been spread about the fate which will be

doled out to them. Men have lost their confidence: they are convinced that the Allies mean to leave Syria divided into three parts as it is now, and that the promised union of the Arab people in an Arab kingdom or confederation is a myth . . . Did not Sir Henry McMahon, too, in his pact with my father the King of the Hedjaz promise us what we now ask, an Arab state within the boundaries we claim?"¹³

However, the implementation of these proclamations depended naturally on the two imperial powers whose troops occupied Syria, Palestine and Iraq. The latter had also proclaimed its independence and chosen Emir Abdullah, Sharif Hussein's other son, as King. Instead of recognizing the proclamations as genuine expressions of the popular will, and acting upon them by giving effect to their commitment to the principle of the consent of the governed, the British and French governments declared that they did not recognize the proceedings in Damascus.

San Remo Conference 1920

The Allied Powers met in April 1920, at San Remo, Italy, to settle many of the outstanding questions of the post-war settlement. Although Anglo-French differences over German responsibility in the war dominated public attention, the question of the possessions of Turkey was the most crucial to the future of the Middle East. As British Prime Minister Lloyd George had already indicated at the House of Commons before leaving for San Remo, the British and French governments were anxious to repudiate the proclamation of Syrian independence.

At the same time, Lloyd George was also anxious to put an end to the British military administration in Palestine, which had been the object of incessant complaints by the Zionists. Sir Herbert Samuel had returned from Palestine and was in San Remo, as was a full Zionist delegation headed by the Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann.

On April 24, Lloyd George, Lord Curzon, Sir Herbert Samuel and Chaim Weizmann met to concert about the strategy to follow. Weizmann set the tone for the fate of Palestine. The wishes of the overwhelming majority of its population apparently counted for little, as did the solemn pledges and statements made by France and England about their commitment to the principle of the consent of the governed.

The following day, April 25, it was announced that Mandates were to be given to Britain for Mesopotamia and Palestine and to France for Syria. However, as the peace treaty with Turkey had not yet been concluded, the assignment of Mandates to themselves by the two European powers carried no legal weight, since the Mandates were supposed to come out of the peace treaty and be formally assigned by the League of Nations.

In fact, what happened at San Remo represented nothing more than the hasty implementation of the colonial arrangements agreed upon in the Sykes–Picot agreement, loosely disguised under the term ‘Mandate’. The British and the French wanted to reverse the disturbing developments in Syria and Palestine and could not wait until the peace treaty with Turkey had been signed, so they arrogated to themselves the necessary power to act against the Arab nationalist movement. In what President Wilson described as “the whole disgusting scramble” for the Middle East, the Colonial Powers decided to break Syria up into three parts: Palestine, Lebanon and a reduced Syria. France demanded and received mandates over Syria and Lebanon, Britain staked a claim on, and received, mandates for Palestine and Iraq.¹⁴

“The decisions”, wrote Herbert Samuel to Lord Curzon, “accorded neither with the wishes of the inhabitants nor with the unqualified end-of-war undertakings about freedom of choice. They were pieces of unabashed self-interest, suggesting to many onlookers that all talk of liberating small nations from oppression was so much cant.”¹⁵ The two imperial powers agreed on assignment of Mandates and drew new frontiers for Palestine and the Middle East in conformity with their secret arrangements.

Significantly, it was not the League of Nations that assigned the Mandates. It was the Supreme Council of the Allied Powers, composed of England, France, and Italy – now freed to pursue their imperial designs by the withdrawal of the United States – that assigned them. The Mandates were in effect another name for imperial domination. They were given by the conquering powers to themselves. The League of Nations was simply used as a supervisor of the administration of the Mandates, to give them an aura of international legitimacy.

Syria was divided and Palestinian independence was denied, actions which violated both the moral and legal obligations of the Allies toward the Arabs. “On each essential count”, wrote Antonius, “it was clear that the well-being and the future development of the country were bound

to be retarded if its unity were destroyed. Nor had indications been lacking to show the strength of feeling in the country itself on the subject of unity. But all those considerations were ignored; and the Supreme Allied Council, mindful only of the appetites of its members, found that the only way to satisfy Great Britain and France was to divide Syria among them.”¹⁶

The decisions of the Peace Conference and the San Remo Conference seemed to the Arabs “a sentence of servitude imposed upon them not for any guilt but for the disparity between European might and their own weakness”.¹⁷

A Turning Point in the Zionist Plan for the Takeover of Palestine

Only the Zionists had cause to celebrate. Their claim over Palestine had been given legitimacy in an international document and their demand to end the British military administration in Palestine and replace it with a civilian one dedicated to serving the Zionist goals had been met.

It was a turning point in the Zionist plan for the takeover of Palestine. A jubilant Weizmann told an interviewer: “Two decisions have been reached which are of the utmost importance. The first is the embodiment of the Balfour Declaration in the Treaty, thus giving it international sanctions. We have always considered Mr Balfour’s Declaration as the charter of our liberties, and international sanction is the turning point in Jewish history. The second decision is that the British Government, which is the Mandatory Power in Palestine, has agreed that a civil administration shall be set up immediately in Palestine to carry the Balfour Declaration into effect, always having regard to the legitimate interests of the non-Jewish communities. The Zionists are satisfied that the intentions of the Government will be carried out without delay. We are most anxious to begin reconstruction, for the last two years in Palestine have brought about general demoralization. The painful period is over, and the beginning of the reconstruction work will be hailed both by the Jews and the Arabs as delivery from a nightmare.”¹⁸

Thus, Great Britain completed its renegeing of its promises to the Arabs. This had begun with the Sykes–Picot agreement, was confirmed with the Balfour Declaration and was finished with the Mandate decision, which was clearly in violation both of the Anglo-French declarations

and previous British pledges and the expressed wishes of the people of the region as could be ascertained from the Syrian Declaration of Independence and from the findings of the American King–Crane Commission Report.

Treaty of Sèvres 1920 and the Aftermath

In August of the same year, 1920, the Treaty of Sèvres was signed at the Peace Conference with Turkey, although it was never ratified. It incorporated the decisions made at San Remo, and the Turks, who had been given the text during the San Remo Conference, could only discuss it but not alter it.

The Treaty detached Palestine from Syria and treated it separately. Article 94 of the Treaty accorded Syria and Mesopotamia provisional independence subject to forced administrative assistance in accordance with the provisions of type A Mandates under Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations.

Article 95 of the Treaty of Sèvre dealt with Palestine, which was also a type A Mandate under Article 22 of the Covenant. However, the article deliberately left out the provision about provisional independence and replaced it with the text of the Balfour Declaration. The provisions of that Declaration, as discussed above, clearly ran counter to the provisions of Article 22, which recognized the provisional independence of the mandated territory and called for the wishes of the people to be a principle consideration in the choice of the Mandatory Power.

Describing the manoeuvre of the colonial powers with regard to Palestine, Joseph Jeffries wrote: “They tore Palestine from the protection of the Covenant which predicated its independence, thrust it under the Balfour Declaration which precluded its independence, and then dared to maintain that they were following the code which they had violated. Never has hypocrisy been so luscious: never had perjury worn a bolder face.”¹⁹

The Arabs rose in violent revolt against the planned imposition of alien colonial rule and the imperial policy of divide and conquer. The British and French, who were in physical occupation of Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria, responded with violent repression of Arab nationalist revolts.

The French extended their military occupation to the rest of Syria and expelled King Feisal from Damascus. At the same time, the British

forcibly prevented Arab forces from marching on Damascus. British Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill came to Palestine and persuaded Prince Abdullah, who was preparing to march at the head of an Arab army on Damascus to avenge the expulsion of his brother, to remain in Transjordan, in return for British financial assistance. In 1921, the British made King Feisal King of Iraq.

As for Feisal's and Abdullah's father, King Hussein, the British were getting tired of his demands that they keep their pledges. They considered him "a tiresome old man who had outlived his usefulness to them, and who had hoodwinked them into making unnecessary promises which they had found it impracticable to keep."²⁰

Deprived of British protection, Hussein became more vulnerable to the ambitions of his traditional rival and challenger Ibn Saud, leader of the puritanical Wahaabi sect. Ibn Saud marched on Hedjaz in 1924, expelled Hussein and his son Ali, annexed the kingdom of Hedjaz, and founded the kingdom carrying his own family name: Saudi Arabia. The British left Hussein, their wartime ally, to suffer an ignominious end of loss of power and country.

The Dismemberment of Syria and the Subjugation of Palestine

Britain and France had forcibly imposed a new political system by which they divided the Arab territories along the lines of their secret agreements. Arabs who had travelled freely from one part of their lands to another under Turkish rule suddenly found themselves divided into separate entities with different socio-political systems, and with their movements restricted by the imposition of new citizenships with different passports and travel regulations.

As Norman and Helen Bentwich observed: "Under the Turkish rule, Syria and Palestine had been parts of one Vilayet (or province): Palestine was then known as Southern Syria. When the two areas came under different political, social and economic systems, a Palestinian Arab wishing to visit members of his family in Damascus or Beirut, had to obtain a passport and visa, and was confronted by currency and customs regulations . . . Nor were intriguing politicians in England and France slow to stir up discontent between the Arabs under the rival Mandates."²¹

When the Peace Treaty was signed, on June 28, 1919, it incorporated the Covenant of the newly established League of Nations. The Covenant thus became a binding instrument of international law. Article 22 of the Covenant provided that in the territories liberated from colonial rule and whose inhabitants are not able to stand by themselves “there should be applied the principle that the well-being and development of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilization”.²²

In its fourth clause, Article 22 made clear that with regard “to certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire [which] have reached a stage of development . . . their existence as separate nations can be provisionally recognized subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as they are able to stand alone. The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory.”²³ The same clause created what were called type A Mandates. The Mandate on Palestine was a type A Mandate.

With regard to Palestine therefore, the League of Nations was in effect provisionally recognizing its independence subject only to “rendering administrative assistance”. It was therefore clearly understood that in selecting the power to render such administrative assistance, the wishes of the people of Palestine must be a principal consideration. And that the “well being and development” of the people of Palestine “form a sacred trust of civilization.”

Delivering Palestine to the Zionists

It is a testimony to their remarkable power of persuasion and political influence that the Zionists managed to actively participate in and influence the drafting of the Mandate for Palestine, which England was supposed to administer “as a sacred trust of civilization” for the welfare and development of the people of Palestine. Those people of Palestine were remarkable by their absence from the whole process, their desire for independence ignored, the expression of their wishes and aspirations suppressed.

Very much as was the case with the Balfour Declaration, the Zionists were meticulously attentive to details and preparatory work. They consequently entered into negotiations with the British delegation at the Peace Conference in the spring of 1919, and by July of the same

year, the Zionists could claim with satisfaction that their primary drafts, by Frankfurter and Gans, “were handed to the British Delegation and were largely embodied in the first tentative draft of July 5th, 1919”.²⁴

By the end of the year the Zionists could express satisfaction that the second draft of the Mandate “showed clearly that very serious considerations had been given to the Zionist suggestions”. Although the ‘historical title’ to Palestine, which the Zionists wanted recognized in the Mandate, was not included, the preamble of the first draft was modified to include recognition of “the historical connection with Palestine and the claim which this gives them to reconstitute Palestine as their National Home (Erez Israel)”.²⁵

Obviously in law there is no such a thing as a ‘historic connection’ giving title or sovereignty, or even a claim over anything, or else the whole international system would degenerate into an endless anarchy of competing ‘historic connections’ to practically every settled piece of land. The Zionists understood this, which is why they lobbied for recognition of the more powerful, but even more indefensible concept of ‘historic title’. The British were also aware of the implications of the use of such phraseology, hence their opposition to the use of ‘historic title’ and their hesitations and vicissitudes about the insertion of the phrase ‘historic connection’.

The British also conceded the demand for a Jewish Agency, and recognized the Zionist Organization as such an agency, which was to be granted preferential rights and under whose authority native Palestinian Jews were placed. However, as Lord Curzon replaced Balfour as Foreign Secretary, some important modifications to the draft mandate appeared in the first official draft of June 10, 1920. The reference to ‘historical connection’ had been expunged from the preamble, as was the privileged status of the Jewish Agency with regard to concessions.

More importantly, the clause making all of Palestine subject to the organization of the National Home project had been removed. From a Zionist point of view, the removal of these important concessions was compensated for with the inclusion of the Balfour Declaration in the Mandate for Palestine.

The League of Nations Council met on July 31, 1920, at San Sebastian with delegates from France, Italy, Japan, Belgium, Brazil, Spain, and Greece. Lord Balfour represented the British Empire. The League Council was in essence an embodiment of the Allied countries

under the sway of Lord Balfour. The League Council interpreted Article 22 of the Covenant to mean that there was no obligation to consult the League members and that the League Council had the right to regulate the Mandatory Power's authority.

In the meantime, the Zionist drafters had succeeded in getting the British to re-institute the "historic connection" clause to the preamble of the draft mandate for Palestine, but only for it to be removed as a superfluous phrase in the October draft of the Mandate. The Zionists reacted by increasing the pressure. Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann met Balfour twice in November, the Prime Minister was approached, and several members of the Cabinet were lobbied. In all these manoeuvres, Sir Herbert Samuel, who was already High Commissioner in Palestine, lent his valuable support.

The result was that, on November 9, 1920 a House of Commons resolution was introduced and adopted. It read: "That His Majesty's Government be urged to include in the terms of the Palestine Mandate definite recognition of the historic connection of the Jewish people with Palestine, and of the status of the Zionist Organisation, and of the policy of the development of Palestine into a Palestinian self-governing Commonwealth."²⁶

The Times and the *Manchester Guardian* newspapers supported the Zionist positions in leading articles. The "historic connection" clause was adopted. However, the monopoly on economic concessions demanded by the Zionists posed a problem because of American protests against being shut out from the economic opportunities in the region, especially the oil-rich Mesopotamia.

Bainbridge Colby of the State Department had sent a stiff dispatch to Lord Curzon which insisted on the rights of the Americans to be consulted and not be shut out and protested that: "The United States Government is unable to concur in the view that the terms of the Mandates can properly be discussed only by the Council of the League of Nations." Colby warned against "certain departures which I believe I discern in your Lordship's communication, from the underlying principles of a Mandate, as evolved and sought to be applied by the Allied and Associated Powers to the territories under their temporary dominion by their joint struggle and common victory".²⁷

After the American note, observed Joseph Jeffries, "the delivery of the country [Palestine]'s resources into the Zionist hands was no

longer crudely proposed in the Mandate. It became a matter of covert understanding between the Zionists and their allies in the Cabinet and in other high places.”²⁸

Britain Gives Itself the Mandate Over Palestine

The draft Mandate was at last ready, with the famous ‘historic connection’ entrenched in the preamble, and on December 10, Balfour sent it with a covering letter to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations. Jeffries’ caustic account of this has not been surpassed and place must be given to his description:

It is worth considering for a moment what the status of this letter was. Its sender acted on behalf of the British Government, which acted on behalf of the Supreme Council of the Allied Powers. Letters passing from the Supreme Allied Council to the Council of the League of Nations had the air of passing from one international body to another international body, the twain being aloof, disinterested and unrelated to each other. But in reality they were intertwined . . . It is unnecessary to enlarge upon Balfour’s presence in the League Council and his close connection with the Supreme Council. The League Council in the affairs of Palestine was an orchestra, which he conducted. The Supreme Council in the affairs of Palestine, once the French had been placated concerning the frontiers of their mandatory area, was nothing but an alias of Mr Lloyd George’s, and he in Palestine affairs was one with Lord Balfour.

“So in truth there is scarcely an exaggeration in saying that when His Majesty’s Government, acting on behalf of the Supreme Council of the Allied Powers, pompously was proclaimed as submitting the draft Mandates for Palestine and for Mesopotamia to the Council of the League of Nations, little more occurred than that Lord Balfour sent the draft Mandate for approval to Lord Balfour. Balfour dispatched the Mandate from his desk, pursued it, caught it up in the Council Chamber, and surpassed any farce on the stage by having its contents laid before him, and in a covering letter ‘venturing to hope’ that what he had drawn up ‘would satisfy’ himself.”²⁹

Among the important Zionist achievements in this latest draft sent by Balfour to himself, a note should be made of the fact that when the Balfour Declaration was inserted, the safeguard clause theoretically protecting the Palestinian Arabs’ rights had been removed, thus exposing the real

intentions of the Zionists and of their British supporters. But it seems that someone had second thoughts about this and the safeguard clause for the Palestinian Arabs was reinstated in the final draft of August 1921.

The Illegality of the Palestine Mandate and Opposition to It

The Mandate for Palestine, as noted previously, included the provisions of the Balfour Declaration for the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine and for the protection of the rights of the “non-Jewish communities”. The latter was placed in the preamble of the new draft thus giving it somewhat more pre-eminence than in the previous draft. The final text of the Mandate also contained a new Article (25) entitling the Mandatory Power to prohibit the application of the Balfour Declaration to the territories east of the Jordan.

British Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill had already, in 1921, set up Emir Abdullah as ruler of the autonomous Transjordan in return for the Emir’s acquiescence in French rule in Syria, and the new article in the mandate text was simply recognizing the new arrangement.

The Mandate for Palestine, as Joseph Jeffries pointed out, clearly violated the Covenant of the League of Nations in entrusting the British government with the administration of Palestine, and in making Palestine subservient to the establishment of the Jewish National Home.

The Mandate deliberately disregarded the provision in Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations recognizing Palestine as an independent nation, like Iraq and Syria, “subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory until such time as [the inhabitants] are able to stand alone”.

Furthermore, Article 22 clearly stipulated that the administrative advice and assistance to provisionally recognized independent nations such as Palestine would be rendered by a country selected on the basis of “the wishes of these communities”.³⁰ In assigning the mandate and in drafting its text, the people of Palestine, as Lord Curzon admitted, were nigh forgotten and ignored.

Moreover, under Article 2 of the Mandate the land and resources of Palestine were “used by the Mandatory for a Zionist speculation instead of being kept in trust for its lawful owners, the native population of the country”. This, as Jeffries pointed out, “was fraudulent trusteeship at its worst”.³¹

In addition, the laws of the Covenant clearly precluded government by the Mandatory in Palestine. That is to say, the Covenant laid down that only the people of Mandate types B and C were to be ruled by their Mandatory. Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia (as countries of Mandate type A), however, were *not* to be ruled by their Mandatory. They were simply to receive ‘administrative assistance and advice’, which of course supposed that these ex-Turkish peoples would be allowed to set up their own governments and administrations. In the case of Palestine, British and Zionist leaders were determined to prevent this from happening. “The combined equivocations of Mr Lloyd George, General Smuts and the Zionist Organization cannot alter or disguise that.”³²

Thus, the British came to directly administer Palestine and took along the Zionists whom they viewed as partners in the enterprise, at the expense and in total disregard of the right to self-government of the Arabs in Palestine.

Article 4 of the draft mandate for Palestine, approved by the British Cabinet on November 29, 1920, and submitted for the approval of the League of Nations on December 7, 1920, provided that: “An appropriate Jewish Agency shall be recognized as a public body for the purpose of advising and co-operating with the Administration of Palestine in such economic, social and other matters as may affect the establishment of the Jewish National Home and the interests of the Jewish population in Palestine.”³³

The Palestinian Arabs would repeatedly point to the invalidity of the Mandate because it violated specific stipulations in the Covenant of the League of Nations, concerning their right to self-government and to receiving nothing more than “administrative assistance and advice”. Such repeated protestations, however, were easily dismissed and ignored.

The Zionists were able to present themselves and to act as if they were the only stakeholders who mattered in Palestine.

Opposition to the British Mandate over Palestine

When Lord Curzon read the Mandate, he observed that it “reeks of Judaism in every paragraph and is an avowed constitution for a Jewish state. Even the poor Arabs are only allowed to look through the keyhole as a non-Jewish community. It is quite clear that this mandate has been drawn up by someone reeling under the fumes of Zionism.”³⁴

Lord Islington led the attack on the Mandate in the House of Lords. On June 21, 1922, he proposed the following revealing and important motion. "That the Mandate for Palestine in its present form is unacceptable to this House", the motion read, "because it directly violates the pledges made by His Majesty's Government to the people of Palestine in the Declaration of October 1915, and again in the Declaration of November 1918, and is, as at present framed, opposed to the sentiments and wishes of the great majority of the people of Palestine; that therefore its acceptance by the Council of the League of Nations should be postponed until such modifications have therein been effected as will comply with the pledges given by His Majesty's Government."³⁵

This motion was carried by 60 votes to 29 and the government was defeated. But the British government had no intention of taking the wishes of the Palestinian people into account and reversed the decision of the House of Lords in the House of Commons.³⁶

Just to underline this, Chaim Weizmann, dejected and discouraged by the Lords motion, had gone to see Balfour to complain about the opposition of the House of the Lords, Balfour, Weizmann later wrote, reassured him by saying: "What does it matter if a few foolish Lords passed such a motion?"³⁷

Indeed, it did not matter very much since Balfour and his government had control over the machinery of the League of Nations and were certain to speed up the confirmation of the Mandate by the League, which was no more than a formality. The League of Nations essentially confirmed the decisions reached at the San Remo Conference. The Mandates over Palestine, Iraq, and Syria, were awarded to Great Britain and France in fact not by the League of Nations but by the Supreme Allied Council. In essence, as pointed out previously, Britain had awarded itself the Mandate over Palestine.

In December, a Subcommittee set up by the Assembly of the League of Nations to examine the Mandates met in Geneva and requested the Council to communicate to it the draft Mandates received from Lord Balfour. The Council refused, saying that the Mandates were communicated to its chairman "confidentially". The drafts could be read confidentially but no public disclosure could be permitted.

Frustrated in its attempts to discuss the contents of the drafts, the Assembly passed a resolution which read: "The Assembly of the League regrets that the Council should have refused to publish draft

mandates before they came into effect.” And referring to the news which leaked about the Anglo-French oil deal in Mesopotamia, and the intended monopoly of exploitation of Palestine to be given by the British government to its Zionist friends, the Assembly noted with regret: “a Mandatory must not be allowed to use its power under the Mandate in order to exploit for itself or its friends the natural resources of a Mandates territory.”³⁸

As Jeffries observed: “not only the Arabs but the majority of the countries represented in the League of Nations had had no say in the drafting of the Mandate and knew nothing about its terms before it had been enacted by the small group of powers which constituted its League.”³⁹

The fact that the Mandate was issued without any reference to the Arab nation seems to have somehow disturbed the House of Lords. In examining the Mandate, the House of Lords decided to refuse its approval. Lord Grey, who had been Foreign Secretary at the time of the Hussein–McMachon agreement, summed up the sentiment of his peers in the statement he made in the House of Lords on March 27, 1923: “I think we are placed in a considerable difficulty by the Balfour Declaration itself . . . It promises a Zionist home without prejudice to the civil and religious rights of the population of Palestine. A Zionist home, my Lords, undoubtedly means or implies a Zionist Government over the district in which the home is placed, and as 93 per cent of the population are Arabs, I do not see how you can establish other than an Arab Government without prejudice to their civil rights.”⁴⁰

But the British government intended to go ahead with its project despite the objection of important segments of the British Jewish community, the objections of the House of Lords, and the opposition of the various British military administrators in Palestine, who could see for themselves the realities obscured from the British public.

The Mandate may have been illegal, having violated the Covenant of the League of Nations, and the rights of the people of Palestine to self-government. The Muslim and Christian majority of the inhabitants of Palestine may have had justice and law on their sides, but the British and Zionists had power on theirs. The plan was proceeding according to Zionist leader Herzl’s early injunction that might must take precedence over right. The might of the British forces in Palestine provided the necessary cover the Zionists needed to take over the country.

As one writer observed: “The legal arguments may have been sound enough, but they only underline the actual weakness of the Palestinian position within the total power profile. Under conditions of colonial rule, demands made peacefully by the governed upon legal and moral grounds pose no threat to the power of the established authority, and concessions can be safely refused. Britain offered ‘concessions, but in a manner which left the Palestinians only one peaceful option – that of debating their gradual subordination and perpetual submission.”⁴¹

NOTES

- 1 Harry N. Howard, *The King–Crane Commission: An American Inquiry in the Middle East* (Beirut: Khayat’s, 1963), p. 148.
- 2 J. M. N. Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality* (Westport, Conn: Hyperion Press, 1976), pp. 284–85, and George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1965), pp. 440–42.
- 3 Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality*, op. cit., pp. 285–86.
- 4 Ibid., p. 338.
- 5 Howard, *The King–Crane Commission*, op. cit., p. 218.
- 6 Ibid., p. 327.
- 7 See Howard, *The King–Crane Commission*; and also the full text of the King–Crane Commission Report in Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, op. cit., pp. 443–58.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Quoted in Howard, *The King–Crane Commission*, op. cit., p. 86.
- 11 Ibid., p. 311.
- 12 Ibid., p. 314.
- 13 Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality*, op. cit., p. 322.
- 14 Doreen Ingrams, *Palestine Papers 1917–1922: Seeds of Conflict* (New York: George Braziller, 1973), p. 91.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, op. cit., p. 353.
- 17 Ibid., p. 358.
- 18 Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality*, op. cit., p. 352.
- 19 Ibid., p. 379.
- 20 Ibid., p. 379.
- 21 Norman and Helen Bentwich, *Mandate Memories: 1918–1948* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), p. 24.
- 22 The Royal Institute of International Affairs. Information Department Papers No. 20a. “Great Britain and Palestine 1915–1939” (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), pp. 118–19.

- 23 “Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations 28 June 1919”, in J. C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Middle East: A Documentary Record: 1914–1956*, vol. II (Princeton, New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand, 1956), p. 62.
- 24 Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality*, op. cit., p. 559.
- 25 “Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations 28 June 1919”, op. cit.
- 26 Ibid., p. 532.
- 27 Ibid., pp. 533–34.
- 28 Ibid., p. 534.
- 29 Ibid., p. 535.
- 30 “Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations 28 June 1919”, in Hurewitz, *Diplomacy*, op. cit., p. 62.
- 31 J. Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality*, op. cit., p. 561.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 The Royal Institute of International Affairs. “Great Britain and Palestine”, op. cit., p. 120.
- 34 Ingrams, *Palestine Papers*, op. cit., p. 96
- 35 Christopher Sykes, *Crossroads to Israel* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1965), p. 68; and Michael Adams and Christopher Mayhew, *Publish It Not: The Middle East Cover-Up* (London: Longman, 1975), p. 42.
- 36 Adams and Mayhew, *Publish It Not*, op. cit., p. 42.
- 37 Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error: The Autobiography of Chaim Weizmann* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), p. 290; and Sykes, *Crossroads to Israel*, op. cit., p. 69.
- 38 Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality*, op. cit., p. 539.
- 39 Ibid., p. 26.
- 40 Sykes, *Crossroads to Israel*, op. cit., p. 72. See also Nevill Barbour, *Nisi Dominus: A Survey of the Palestine Controversy* (London: George G. Harap, Co., 1946), p. 107.
- 41 David Waines, “The Failure of the Nationalist Resistance”, in Ibrahim Abu-Lughod (ed.), *The Transformation of Palestine* (Evanston: Northwest University Press, 1971), pp. 207–35, p. 222.

The Zionists Strengthen Their Position, 1921

As soon as it arrived in Palestine in 1918, the Zionist Commission proceeded to pressure the British military administration into deferring to its authority and taking cues from its policy orientations. The British military administration resisted Zionist pressure and complained to London about Zionist interference in the administration of Palestine. These complaints were normally referred to either Balfour or Sir Herbert Samuel, both Zionist supporters. Weizmann even once nominated Samuel to be the Chairman of the Zionist Commission in Palestine. Both Balfour and Samuel overruled suggestions by the various military administrators in Palestine, at great risk to their own careers, to discontinue British government support for the Balfour Declaration Zionist project.

In one instance, Wyndham Deedes, a member of the British government in Palestine and a strong supporter of Zionism, wrote from Palestine to the Colonial Office. He questioned the wisdom of the elevation of the Zionist Organization to the status of quasi-governmental body: "An exception has been made in this country for which, I think, there is no precedent elsewhere, of associating with us in the administration of the country another body, the Zionist Commission." He pointed out that Zionist actions in Palestine have made this association unacceptable to the Arabs. "But how much more dangerous must this association appear in their eyes when the least trusted of the two Partners professes an Extremist Policy and announces its intention far and wide of bringing the other Partner into line! For such is the case."¹

In another instance, General Gilbert Clayton, Chief Political Officer at Allenby's Headquarters in Cairo, Egypt, dispatched to the Foreign Office in May 1919 a report from one of the British military administrators stating: "the Palestinians desire their country for themselves and will resist any immigration of Jews . . . by any measure in their power including active hostilities."² General Clayton recommended that

the government abandon the policy of the Balfour Declaration. The British government reacted by replacing General Clayton with Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen, who described himself as “an ardent Zionist”. Yet, Meinertzhagen came to exactly the same conclusion: “The people of Palestine would revolt if told that the British intended to carry out a Zionist programme at their expense.”³

When Justice Brandeis visited Palestine in July 1919, he was disturbed by the expectations raised among the Palestinians by the King–Crane Commission and by the apparent lack of enthusiasm of some British military officers in supporting the Balfour Declaration. He went straight to the Army Headquarters and told Major-General Arthur Money, the Chief British Military Administrator: “ordinances of the military authorities should be submitted first to the Zionist Commission”. The shocked Major-General Money replied: “For a Government to do that would be to derogate its own position.” Brandeis threatened: “It must be understood that the British Government is committed to the support of the Zionist cause. *Unless this is accepted as a guiding principle, I shall have to report it to the Foreign Office.*” (Italics in original.)⁴

Brandeis, and the Zionist Organization, complained to the Foreign Office. Balfour duly sent “detailed instructions” to the Palestinian British authorities reminding them that Palestinian agitations against the Balfour Declaration would be useless. He strongly suggested that Arab leaders should be reminded that Britain was committed to the establishment of a Jewish national homeland.

When Chief Military Administrator Major-General Money made the mistake of recommending mixed government schools in Palestine for Arabs and Jews, London reacted by removing him from his position and replacing him with another, more compliant, officer.

Here is how the Political Report of the Zionist Executive to the 12th Zionist Congress (1921) took credit for bringing about the removal of Major-General Money: “Shortly afterwards a circular letter was sent from Headquarters to all Military Governors asking their opinion as to the advisability of creating mixed Government schools, for Arabs and Jews together. The Zionist Commission, it goes without saying, energetically resisted all these attempts, and it is possible that its endeavours, as well as representations made by the London Office to the Home Government, had something to do with Major-General Money’s recall from the post of Chief Administrator.”⁵

In March 1920, Chief British Military Administrator of Palestine General Louis Bols sent the usual complaint to London about the Zionist Commission and about the inevitable confrontation it was provoking with the Arab majority of Palestine.

General Bols stated in his complaint to the British government: “my own authority and that of every department of my Administration is claimed or impinged upon by the Zionist Commission . . . It is no use saying to the Moslem and Christian elements of the population that our declaration as to the maintenance of the status quo on our entry into Jerusalem has been observed. Facts witness otherwise: The introduction of the Hebrew tongue as an official language; the setting-up of a Jewish judicature; the whole fabric of government of the Zionist Commission, of which they are well aware; the special travelling privileges to members of the Zionist Commission; these have firmly and absolutely convinced the non-Jewish elements of our partiality. On the other hand, the Zionist Commission accuses me and my officers of being anti-Zionism. The situation is intolerable . . . It is manifestly impossible to please partisans who officially claim nothing more than a ‘National Home,’ but in reality will be satisfied with nothing less than a ‘Jewish State’ and all that it politically implies.”⁶

General Bols then marshalled the courage of his convictions and made a daring recommendation: “I recommend therefore, in the interests of peace, of development, of the Zionists themselves, that the Zionist Commission in Palestine be abolished.”⁷

Lloyd George probably received the Bols letter when he was in San Remo, Italy. The Zionists, as we saw above, had been complaining about the British officers in Palestine who had the integrity and courage to expose Zionist intention, but also the naïvety to believe, like the Arabs, in British promises of self-government for Palestine. The Bols letter could therefore have only come as further evidence to be used by the Zionists in their manipulation of those naïve British military administrators in Palestine who were trying to block the common conspiracy of Zionist and British leaders for the transformation of Palestine.

At any rate, Lloyd George agreed with Weizmann at San Remo that what they wanted in Palestine “is men who really care for the National Home policy”.⁸ The British government responded to General Bols’ recommendation by abolishing not the Zionist Commission but the

military administration of General Bols. It replaced it with a civil administration presided over by the chief propagator of the Zionist idea in the War Cabinet, Sir Herbert Samuel, to the dismay of the British military administration.

Samuel and Prime Minister Lloyd George were still in San Remo, Italy, when George offered the job to Samuel in April 1920. Samuel initially expressed concerns that a Jewish High Commissioner committed to the promotion of Zionism in Palestine might encounter difficulty with the Arab majority. George advised him to go about the practical application of the Zionist policy in a very careful way. After consulting with Weizmann who was also in San Remo, and making sure that the Zionist programme was included in the draft mandate for Palestine, Samuel accepted.

Weizmann proudly recalled: "I was mainly responsible for the appointment of Sir Herbert Samuel to Palestine. Sir Herbert Samuel is our friend. At our request, he accepted that difficult position. We put him in that position. He is our Samuel."⁹

It was yet another blow to Arab hopes that Britain would fulfil its promise of independence. General Bols reported how the news was received in Palestine: "Consternation, despondency, and exasperation express the feelings of the Moslem Christian population, the Christians being, if possible, even more bitter than the Moslems. Many of the Notables express incredulity at Mr H. Samuel's appointment, saying that they do not believe the British Government can so deceive them after its promises. It is impossible to induce either party in their spirit to accept Mr. Herbert Samuel as a British statesman of Jewish religion, they look upon him first and foremost as a Jew and Zionist."¹⁰

Palestine Becomes a Colonial Responsibility

To facilitate the implementation of the British government's Zionist policy, Palestine was administratively transferred from Foreign Office to Colonial Office responsibility. Palestine was thus no longer the responsibility of Lord Curzon, who opposed the Zionist plan for a Jewish state, and became the responsibility of Winston Churchill, who wholeheartedly supported it.

Churchill quickly called a conference of senior British officials in posts in the Middle East. The conference convened in Cairo in March

1921. Churchill wanted to settle the question of Arab nationalism, which seemed to be threatening British imperial rule in Iraq and Palestine.

He proceeded in the best of imperial traditions, by acting as a king maker and a controller of peoples' destinies. Thus, he appointed Feisal who had been ejected by the French from his throne in Syria, King of Iraq, in total disregard of what the people of Iraq thought or wished. He separated Transjordan from the administration of Palestine and offered it to Emir Abdullah. The offer was conditional upon Emir Abdullah's renouncing his contemplated war plans against the French in Syria to avenge the expulsion of his brother Feisal and to put an end to French colonial rule. Both Feisal and Abdullah were expected to be and were in fact loyal allies to Britain whose power over peoples' destinies in the Middle East was supreme.

Although Egyptian independence was recognized and Egypt became a kingdom in 1922, British troops remained in Egypt and Egyptian foreign policy was firmly controlled by London. Britain also exercised supreme control over the defence and foreign affairs of Sudan. In 1927, Ibn Saud's conquest of Arabia was recognized by a treaty signed with Britain, which kept a watchful eye on the new Saudi Arabia from the southern shores of British possessions in Aden and the protectorate in the Hadrhamaut. The British also controlled the Persian Gulf and kept control over events in Persia.

The Zionists would later use the separation of Transjordan from the British administration and the subsequent exclusion of the Balfour Declaration in the Mandate from applicability to Transjordan to argue that Palestine had already been partitioned, in an attempt to justify their claim on the whole of mandated Palestine. This argument was a self-serving fabrication with no basis in reality. It confused ambitions and designs on the one hand, with reality on the other hand. The Zionists had expressed the ambition of having British support at the Peace Conference for their proposal that the boundaries of the National Home in Palestine should be the Hedjaz Railway which extended from Damascus to the Arabian peninsula, about forty miles east of the Jordan. But the proposal was never accepted, and even "so ardent a friend of Zionism" as Colonel Meinertzhagen rejected the idea. And indeed, the Zionists had not attempted to establish any settlements in Transjordan, and as a result, the number of Jewish settlers in Transjordan in 1921 was "reliably estimated at two people".¹¹

On June 14, 1921, Winston Churchill made a statement in the House of Commons informing Parliament of the arrangements he had made at the Cairo Conference. He also recognized the source of difficulties in Palestine. "The difficulty about this promise of a National Home for the Jews in Palestine", he stated, "is that it conflicts with our regular policy of consulting the wishes of the people in the Mandated territories and of giving them representative institutions as soon as they are fitted for them, which institutions, in this case, they would use in order to veto any further immigration."¹²

On June 22, Churchill confirmed to a Cabinet meeting that: "If, in the course of many years, they (the Jews) became a majority in the country, they naturally would take it over." To which a Cabinet member enquired: "Pro rata with the Arabs?" Churchill said: "Pro rata with the Arabs. We made an equal pledge that we would not turn the Arab off his land or invade his *political* and social rights."¹³

But the contradiction was inherent in the policy. On the one hand Churchill confirmed that the British government looked forward to the transformation of Palestine and the subjugation of its Arab majority until there was a Jewish majority which would "take over" the country, on the other hand, he claimed that the British government was committed to not violating the political rights of the Arabs. The British support for the Zionist project in Palestine necessarily violated the legal and political commitment of His Majesty's Government. The Jews could not become a majority in Palestine unless the majority of the people in Palestine were subjugated by the occupying power to allow for the Zionist implementation of their project of 'taking over the country'.

Disappointed in Churchill's imperial arrogance and total lack of empathy for their plight, the Arabs held a National Congress which decided to send an official delegation to England and Switzerland. The delegation, headed by Musa Kazim Pasha al-Husseini, arrived in London in August 1921, and pleaded its case, unsuccessfully. It went to Geneva in September, and insisted in meeting with Lord Balfour who refused and arrogantly made it known to the Arab delegation that "if it is anything to do with Palestine, Mr Balfour has already seen Dr Weizmann".¹⁴

The delegates persevered until Balfour reluctantly met with them, but only to tell them that the Zionist programme in Palestine "was an experiment" and to counsel them to go and see Weizmann, already

elevated by Balfour to a position of authority and power over Palestine and its people.

The administration of Palestine through the Colonial Office in effect allowed the Zionists to transform the Jewish Agency in Palestine into “a Jewish government within the mandatory government, exerting political influence and drawing both propaganda and financial support from all over the world”.¹⁵

Samuel Lays the Foundations for the Zionist Takeover

Sir Herbert Samuel, who had during his reconnaissance visit to Palestine in early 1920 been struck by the reality of the Arab presence and Arab opposition to Zionism and regretted the Zionist Commission’s “irritating effect of an alien body in living flesh”,¹⁶ proceeded to form a government supportive of the Zionists’ goals in Palestine.

Thus, he purged the administration of elements which did not show sympathy to Zionism and reappointed only those who agreed to take an oath of loyalty to the policy of the Jewish National Home in Palestine. Norman Bentwich, the Government Legal Secretary and a Zionist who supported the bi-national state solution to Palestine, recognized the difficulty: “The policy of establishing a Jewish National Home in a country inhabited as to nine-tenths of its population by Arabs, a traditionally friendly people, with whom England was concerned to strengthen the ties of friendship, was abnormal.”¹⁷

Samuel also appointed other British Jews who supported Zionism to key positions in the civil colonial government. Thus, in addition to Norman Bentwich, he appointed Ralph Harari as Director of Commerce, Harold Solomon as Controller of Stores and Albert Hyamson as Deputy Director of Immigration assisted by Dennis Cohen. On the urging of the Zionist Commission, Sir Herbert appointed Brigadier-General Wyndham Deedes, a close friend of Weizmann’s, to the most important post of Chief Secretary.

Deedes was so sympathetic to Zionism that the Zionists nominated him unsuccessfully, in 1919, for the post of Chief Administrator of Palestine. Despite personal reservations, in 1920 Deedes accepted the post of Chief Secretary for the chief purpose of promoting the Zionist scheme. After accepting the position, he wrote to Weizmann pledging that “from now on the whole of such abilities and strength as God has given me

will be devoted unreservedly to the realization of your ideal and the accomplishment of the task for which our country has undertaken”.¹⁸

Preparing Zionist Political and Military Institutions

Samuel viewed the task of his government as being the creation of “the conditions, political, legal and (to a lesser extent) economic, necessary for the Zionists themselves to carry on their work”.¹⁹

Samuel also proclaimed his intention to treat the Arabs with justice and promote their well-being. But he quickly found that these goals were fundamentally incompatible given the priority accorded to Zionist plans. His first priority was the promotion of conditions that would make it possible for the Zionists to takeover the country, and this necessarily implied violations of the rights of the majority of people in Palestine, who naturally could not be expected to watch silently as their country was being taken over. Samuel had no compunction about admitting what his first priority was: “The policy of His Majesty’s Government that I had come here to execute”, he said, “is to encourage the immigration of Jews until a point shall be reached . . . at which their interests shall be sufficiently predominant to warrant the establishment of Jewish Government in Palestine.”²⁰

Given this candid admission of the goal of the British administration in Palestine, Samuel’s professed wish to treat the Arabs with justice was either mendacious or his understanding of justice was peculiar. He basically recognized that the only thing he could do for the Arabs was to persuade them to accept their own gradual dispossession and displacement as owners of the country. He succeeded in the priority he came to Palestine to implement, but could not be expected to succeed in reconciling the Arabs to their own dispossession. He therefore set out to openly adopt policies and legislations denying them the institutions of self-government while encouraging and actively supporting the emergence of Jewish institutions of government and military force.

In October 1920, Samuel permitted the meeting of the elected ‘Constituent Assembly’ of the Yishuv (the Jewish community), which had been banned by General Bols, thus encouraging the growth of autonomous Jewish institutions in Palestine. Under the Samuel–Deedes administration, the Zionists felt protected enough to establish the Haganah in December 1920, which began developing as an organized underground army.

At the same time, the Samuel–Deedes administration discouraged and blocked the growth of representative Arab institutions. In December 1920, the third Palestine Arab Congress convened at Haifa, under the leadership of Musa Kazim Pasha al-Husseini, and passed resolutions condemning Zionism, which it sent to the governments in London and Jerusalem. Samuel and Deedes dismissed the representativity of the Congress and announced that there would be “no change of policy in Palestine”.

Seizing Economic Control of the Country

It was in 1921 that the granting of the most far-reaching monopolistic concession Palestine had ever known was made to a Jewish company controlled by Pinhas Rutenberg, a Russian Jew and an effective agent of the Zionists. The water-power concession was to run for 70 years and granted Rutenberg discretionary power to expropriate land, property, buildings and any other elements deemed necessary for the “conveniences of the concessions”.

There were to be no other competing concessions from Arabs or anybody else, nobody was permitted to sell electric energy or to construct canals, dams, reservoirs or any other works for the generation of electric energy in the country.

During the Houses of Commons debate on the Rutenberg affair on July 4, 1922, an astounded Sir William Johnson-Hicks said: “I have had some experience of contracts in the City, but the Rutenberg contract contains the most astounding concessions I have ever read or seen in my life. The contract gives over the development of the whole country to Mr Rutenberg.”²¹

Other applications from non-Zionists or Arab companies were routinely denied to ensure that the Zionists remained, with the blessing of an accomplice British government, in sole control of the development of the country.

Making Palestine Jewish: Population and Land

Samuel proceeded to enact a number of legislations the targets of which, in accordance with Zionist designs, were two fold: population and land. A pro-Zionist British official was appointed Head of the Immigration

Department and soon a policy was in place where a generous Jewish immigration schedule was adopted and “visas were to be granted to all persons recommended by the Zionist Organization”.²² Samuel encouraged Jewish immigration, which increased steadily until it reached 35,000 in 1925, Samuel’s last year. The unprecedented level of immigration to Palestine in this year alone represented a third of the existing total Jewish population in Palestine.²³

The Samuel administration also enacted land ownership legislation to encourage absentee Arab landlords to sell to Jewish settlers. Land thus bought became the property of the Jewish National Fund, which gave it an extra-territorial status. The Jewish National Fund evicted Arab farmers, leased land to Jewish settlers under stringent rules forbidding the employment of non-Jewish labour and banning its sale or concession to non-Jews. In case of non-Jewish inheritors, the land reverted to the Jewish Fund.

The Histadrut, the Jewish general labour organization, followed a similar policy of employing only Jewish workers, the effect of which, in the words of the legal officer in the Mandatory Government – a Zionist – was to institute “a policy of ‘economic apartheid’ [which] was bound to strengthen the resistance of Arabs to Jewish immigration”.²⁴ A system of slow dispossession and uprooting of the Palestinian peasantry started to take hold.

When the Samuel administration ended in 1925, the Zionist Organization Congress, meeting in Vienna in September 1925, wrote to Samuel thanking him for “the completion of the first stage of the establishment of the Jewish National Home”.

As Lord Sydenham of Comb noted with regret in early 1921: “a veil has since fallen between the British people and the rightful owners of Palestine, for whose welfare they have become responsible. The Moslem-Christian League has been reduced to silence. Local disturbances still apparently occur; but we do not hear of them. A Jew has been made Chief of the Judicial Branch; another is Assistant-Governor of Jerusalem, and Zionists are evidently winning their way into the administration . . . The resignation of experienced British officers is an even more serious matter. In Palestine, it is privately given out that the purpose of the Government is to allow the country to be filled up by Jewish immigrants and then to hand it over to a Zionist administration. As this plan appears to conflict violently with some official assurances,

it is easy to understand that an honourable man may feel strong conscientious objections to participating in a policy which has not been openly avowed.”

But the honourable British men who objected were dismissed or replaced. The conspiracy for the hijacking of Palestine had no place for honour. It was based on duplicity and deception, moved by imperial ambitions and implemented by force. Might continued to take precedence over right.

Growing Arab Opposition

A pattern was being set. However, the growth in the power of the Zionists, the steady flow of European Jewish settlers and the slow process of transformation of Palestine and dispossession of its peasantry evoked growing opposition from the Arabs. This opposition soon took the form of riots and acts of violence. The British would respond with a Commission of Inquiry and a policy statement or a White Paper denying that it intended to allow the Zionists to subordinate the Arab majority.

During his visit to Palestine in March 1921, Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill was confronted by angry Arabs. He exhorted them to remember that “the second part of the Balfour Declaration . . . solemnly and explicitly promises to the inhabitants of Palestine *the fullest protection of their civil and political rights*”. [Author’s italics.]²⁵

But British assurances were belied by continued effective British support for the Zionist program, and, as a British government publication put it: “Land and immigration, the two vexed questions upon which almost all subsequent trouble has hung, were prominent stumbling blocks from the first.”²⁶

No claims of economic benefits to Palestine from Zionist colonization or from British colonial rule could change or diminish that reality. Indeed as Albert Hourani observed: “the essence of imperialism is to be found in a moral relationship – that of power and powerlessness – and any material consequences which spring from it are not enough to change it”.²⁷

Arab anger and frustrations were waiting for a pretext to explode. The pretext was provided when the Socialist Revolutionary Party – a communist Zionist organization – defied a ban and organized, on

May 1, 1921, a demonstration led mainly by illegal Jewish immigrants from the Soviet Union, shouting revolutionary slogans and calling for the transformation of Palestine into a socialist soviet. The Communist Zionists clashed with the officially authorized Zionist demonstration organized by the Social Democratic Party. Provoked and angered, the Arabs joined the fray. Violent clashes between Arabs and Jews in Jaffa, the principal point of Jewish immigration to Palestine, and in Tel Aviv, with the biggest concentration of Jews in Palestine, produced hundreds of casualties on both sides.

The British declared martial law and appointed Sir Thomas Haycraft to examine the cause of the riots. The Haycraft Commission Report pointed to Arab frustrations that the British administration of Palestine was under the control of the Zionists at the expense of the Arab majority.

The Report also pointed out that:

It is important that it should be realized that what is written on the subject of Zionism by Zionists and their sympathizers in Europe is read and discussed by Palestinian Arabs . . . Thus, the *Jewish Chronicle*, No. 2,720, of the 20th May, 1921, makes the following statement in the course of its leading article: "Hence the real key to the Palestinian situation is to be found in giving to Jews as such, those rights and privileges in Palestine which shall enable Jews to make it as Jewish as England is English, or as Canada is Canadian . . ." On the 14th May there appeared in *The Times* a letter from Mr V. Jabotinsky . . . in which he urged that, in view of the Jaffa disturbances, Jews alone should have the privilege of military service in Palestine, Arabs being excluded from the right to bear arms . . ."²⁸

Until the Commission came to examine Dr Eder, acting Chairman of the Zionist Commission, they were unaware to what extent such expressions of opinion as those we have quoted above were authorized by responsible Zionists. Dr Eder was a most enlightening witness . . . In his opinion, there can only be one National Home in Palestine, and that a Jewish one, and no equality in the partnership between Jews and Arabs, but a Jewish predominance as soon as the numbers of that race are sufficiently increased . . . There is no sophistry about Dr Eder; he was quite clear that the Jews should, and the Arabs should not, have the right to bear arms, and he stated his belief that this discrimination would tend to improve Arab-Jewish relations."²⁹

Following the riots, General Congreve, commander of the British forces in the Middle East, had travelled to London and confided to officials of the Colonial Office that he and his officers were certain that “H. M. G. were in the hands of the Zionist Organization, and that no matter what we said, we were really pursuing an unfair policy in favour of the Jews.”³⁰ He warned that the British government in Palestine might face organized insurrection by Palestinian Arabs to fight a “policy hateful to the great majority”.³¹

To render his pro-Zionist policy more palatable to the Palestinian Arabs, Sir Herbert Samuel claimed that the Arabs had misunderstood the Balfour Declaration and his implementation of its provisions. In a speech delivered on June 3, 1921 at the Government House, he claimed that his government policy was not intended to facilitate the “setting up of a Jewish government to rule over the Muslim and Christian majority”. And that: “For the British Government, the trustee under the Mandate for the happiness of the people of Palestine, would never impose upon them a policy which that people had reason to think was contrary to their religious, *their political*, and their economic interests.”³² [Author’s italics.]

Clearly, the transformation of Palestine’s demographics without the consent of the majority of the people was a violation of their political rights. Equally clearly, the refusal of the British government to grant the Palestinians self-governing institutions was also a violation of their political rights. If it were only a matter of administrative arrangements as was often argued, before self-governing institutions were granted, the Arabs might have kept faith in the ruling power. But if the delay was meant to allow the Jewish minority to become the majority in the country before self-governing institutions were granted, then the Palestinian Arabs’ insistence on the suspension of Jewish immigration and the granting of self-governing institutions acquired new urgency.

The Zionists were outraged by Samuel’s speech. The *Jewish Chronicle* in London declared the speech to be “the blackest instance of political betrayal recorded throughout all history.”³³ The Zionists were furious and apprehensive that the Samuel speech might actually mean a change of policy and that the British government in Palestine might indeed pursue a policy which took account of the Palestinian Arabs’ political rights, which would naturally make it next to impossible for the Zionists

to implement their scheme. The Zionists were particularly incensed by Samuel's proposal for a representative assembly in Palestine.

The Zionist Commission formally protested. They lodged, with the Colonial Office, "a strong objection to any such steps as are reported to be in contemplation."³⁴ They argued that any representative body, which would naturally reflect the composition of the population of Palestine, would be hostile to the Jewish National Home.

British Support the Secret Arming of the Zionists in Palestine

It is interesting to note that Samuel did not promise suspension of Jewish immigration. On the contrary, he announced that it would be resumed as normal, but would be more controlled by the government, now on the lookout for Bolshevik influence, as if Palestinian Arabs should fear the Bolsheviks more than they feared the Zionists.

And indeed actual British policy, as opposed to its declared one, made time of the essence for the Palestinian Arabs, for even as Samuel was providing the Arabs with the assurances mentioned above, British and Zionist leaders were secretly working out strategies for further support for, and consolidation of, the Zionist scheme in Palestine.

At a meeting at Balfour's house on July 22, 1921, attended by Prime Minister Lloyd George, Arthur Balfour, Winston Churchill and Chaim Weizmann, the Zionist leader told the British statesmen that the Zionists in Palestine were gunrunning, to which Churchill responded: "We don't mind it, but don't speak of it." Weizmann went on: "I would like it sanctioned. Is it agreed?" All British leaders present agreed.³⁵

Weizmann wanted more assurances. He noted that Churchill had allowed Mesopotamia (Iraq) and Transjordan to develop some forms of self-governments, and he wanted assurances that this would not happen in Palestine lest the majority oppose the Zionist design. He warned Churchill: "If you do the same thing in Palestine it means giving up Palestine – and that is what I want to know." At this point Prime Minister Lloyd George turned to Churchill and instructed him in the following terms: "You mustn't give representative government to Palestine."³⁶

This in fact meant that representative government in Palestine must not be allowed until Jewish immigration increased to sufficient numbers so as to transform Palestine and to ensure Zionist control of any representative institutions in the country. In the meantime, the

British government was to continue to issue the same mendacious reassurances to the Arabs, while allowing more Jewish immigrants into Palestine, and acquiescing in the secret arming of the Zionists.

Resisting Arab Demands for Representative Assembly

The British knew, of course, of the growing opposition in Palestine to the Zionist project and to their support of that project. To avoid violent confrontations with the Arabs, the British agreed to consider the idea of a representative assembly, but one without any power likely to impinge on their control of Palestine, or on the Zionist ability to carry on with their project to take over. Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill, who told the Cabinet that “Zionist policy is profoundly unpopular with all except the Zionists”, instructed the Colonial Office to enter into talks with a Palestinian delegation which arrived in London.

The Palestinian delegation came to ask for and negotiate the establishment of a representative assembly in Palestine. Churchill, however, instructed that the negotiation be conducted purely on the basis of the limited form of representative government proposed by Samuel: a legislative council of twelve elected members (eight Muslims, two Christians, and two Jews) and eleven appointed officials. The Palestinian Arabs rejected the offer arguing that the composition of the legislative council would ensure that the Zionist policy of the British administration would always be carried out.

The delegation proposed an elected legislative assembly but the British would only accept one with a majority of non-elected members. Palestinian leaders demanded a national government and an immediate halt to Jewish immigration. They received neither. The British government was determined to continue its rule over Palestine and to impose the Zionist project. As a result, the various proposals put forward by the Arab delegation for an elected assembly were turned down by the British, who would only offer an assembly with advisory rather than real powers. They also heard Churchill repeat to them that “The British Government meant to carry out the Balfour Declaration.”³⁷

In essence, as one writer observed, “The Arabs were left the option of debating the details of their gradual subordination in Palestine . . . Confronted with this constitutional coercion, the Arab delegation felt itself forced to reject Churchill’s ‘concessions.’ In effect the Arabs told the

colonial secretary that ‘until we see a real practical change in the policy of the British Government we must harbour fears that the intention to create the Jewish National Home is to cause the disappearance or subordination of the Arabic population, culture and language in Palestine.’”³⁸

As a way of resolving the deadlocked London talks, the Colonial Office suggested to Weizmann that he issue a statement renouncing any Zionist aspirations to establish a Jewish state in Palestine. He indignantly rejected any such statement and wrote to Deedes insisting that the Zionists could not give up their project of a Jewish majority and a Jewish state in Palestine: “What else are we striving for? . . . What other meaning is there in the National Home?”³⁹

NOTES

- 1 Bernard Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine: The Mandatory Government and the Arab-Jewish Conflict, 1917–1929* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1978), p. 134.
- 2 Quoted in John Marlowe, *The Seat of Pilate: An Account of the Palestine Mandate* (London: The Cresset Press), p. 70.
- 3 A. P. Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies* (London: Macmillan, 1963), p. 155.
- 4 J. M. N. Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality* (London: Longman, 1939), p. 314.
- 5 Nevill Barbour, *Nisi Dominus: A Survey of the Palestine Controversy* (London: George G. Harap, Co, 1946), p. 126.
- 6 Ibid., p. 97.
- 7 Ibid., p. 97.
- 8 Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality*, op. cit., p. 351.
- 9 Ibid., p. 371.
- 10 Doreen Ingrams, *Palestine Papers 1917–1922: Seeds of Conflict* (New York: George Braziller, 1973), p. 106.
- 11 Christopher Sykes, *Crossroads to Israel* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1965), p. 48.
- 12 Ibid., p. 57.
- 13 David Lloyd George, *The Truth About The Peace Treaties* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1938), p. 1193.
- 14 Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality*, op. cit., p. 459.
- 15 Alfred M. Lilienthal, *The Zionist Connection: What Price Peace?* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1978), p. 25.
- 16 Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, op. cit., p. 79.
- 17 Norman and Helen Bentwich, *Mandate Memories: 1918–1948* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), p. 22.
- 18 Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, op. cit. p. 86.
- 19 Ibid., p. 87.

- 20 Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality*, op. cit., p. 398.
- 21 Ibid., p. 429.
- 22 Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, op. cit., p. 91
- 23 Bentwich, *Mandate Memories*, op. cit., p. 100.
- 24 Norman and Helen Bentwich, *Mandate Memories, 1918–1948* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), p. 53.
- 25 Ingrams, *Palestine Papers*, op. cit., p. 119.
- 26 The Royal Institute of International Affairs. Information Department Papers No. 20a. "Great Britain and Palestine: 1915–1939" (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 35.
- 27 Albert Hourani, "The Decline of the West in the Middle East", in Richard Nolte (ed.), *The Modern Middle East* (New York: Atherton Press, 1963), pp. 30–56, p. 41. See also, A. P. Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies*, op. cit.
- 28 Yehoshua Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestine–Arab National Movement 1918–1929* (London: Frank Cass, 1974), pp. 56–7.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, op. cit., p. 107.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Ibid., p. 109
- 33 Ibid., p. 110.
- 34 Ibid., p. 112.
- 35 Sykes, *Crossroads to Israel*, op. cit., p. 59.
- 36 Ibid., p. 60.
- 37 Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, op. cit., p. 114.
- 38 David Waines, *A Sentence of Exile: The Palestine/Israeli Conflict, 1897–1977* (Wilmette, Illinois: The Medina Press, 1977), pp. 58–59.
- 39 Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, op. cit., p. 115.

5

Zionism and the Nazis

The rise of Nazism in Germany, where Hitler had come to power in January 1933 and proceeded to enact anti-Jewish laws, was successfully used by the Zionists to pressure the British into opening the doors of Palestine for more Jewish immigration. In the best Herzelian tradition, the leadership of the Stern Gang, of whom future Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir was a prominent member, proposed an alliance between Nazi Germany and the future Jewish state, and collaboration for the establishment in the Middle East of a 'New Order' in return for help with the evacuation of Jewish masses from Europe and their settling in Palestine. The leadership of the Stern Gang, which considered itself the 'real' *Irgun Zvai Leumi*, or 'National Military Organization' (NMO), proposed:

The NMO, which is well-acquainted with the goodwill of the German Reich government and its authorities towards Zionist activity inside Germany and towards Zionist emigration plans, is of the opinion that:

1. Common interests could exist between the establishment of a new order in Europe in conformity with the German concept, and the true national aspirations of the Jewish people as they are embodied by the NMO.
2. Cooperation between the new Germany and a renewed folkish-national Hebraium would be possible and,
3. The establishment of the historical Jewish state on *a national and totalitarian basis, and bound by a treaty with the German Reich*, would be in the interests of a maintained and strengthened future German position of power in the Near East.

Proceeding from these considerations, the NMO in Palestine, under the condition the above-mentioned national aspirations of the Israeli freedom movement are recognized on the side of the

German Reich, offers to actively take part in the war on Germany's side.¹ [Author's italics.]

Furthermore, it was not just the fringe extremists of the NMO that wanted to collaborate with the Nazis. Other German Zionists made similar offers, arguing that Zionism and Nazism should collaborate to advance their common commitment to the purity of their respective races.

In a letter sent to the Nazi Party on June 21, 1933, Rabbi Joachim Prinz wrote:

On the foundation of the new state, which has established the principle of race, we wish so to fit our community into the total structure so that for us too, in the sphere assigned to us, fruitful activity for the Fatherland is possible . . . Our acknowledgement of Jewish nationality provides for a clear and sincere relationship to the German people and its national and racial realities. Precisely because we do not wish to falsify these fundamentals, because we, too, are against mixed marriage and are for maintaining the purity of the Jewish group . . .²

Joachim Prinz, who would later become President of the American Jewish Congress, then a fire-eating Zionist rabbi in Berlin, promoted the conviction that an accommodation between Nazis and Jews was possible, but only on the basis of a Zionist–Nazi accord: “A State which is construed on the principle of the purity of nation and race can only have respect for those Jews who see themselves in the same way.”³

The World Zionist Organization itself was prepared to turn the Nazis’ anti-Jewish programme to political advantage to further the aim of wresting Palestine, even if this meant cooperation with the Nazis, which, ultimately, would be at the expense of German Jews. The ultimate alliance was thus formed in 1933: a pact between the Nazis and the Zionists allowing the export of Jewish capital in the form of German export goods to facilitate the transfer of Jews to Palestine over and above the British-imposed quotas which did not apply to Jewish capitalists – i.e., those bringing £1,000 or more.

The arrangement was for German Jews to put their money into a bank in Germany, which was then used to buy German goods to export to Palestine. When the Jewish émigrés finally arrived in Palestine, they would receive payment for the goods they had previously purchased after they had

been sold. Thus, 60% of all capital invested in Palestine between August 1933 and September 1939, plus 16,529 Jewish capitalist immigrants came to Palestine as a result of Zionist collaboration with the Nazis.⁴

The Zionist leadership attempted to defend itself against the charge of ‘boycott-sabbing’ and collaboration with the Nazis by claiming that the pact did not break the boycott. But the reality of Zionist–Nazi collaboration suggested otherwise and soon the Zionists “were soliciting new customers for Germany in Egypt, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq. Eventually the Zionists began exporting oranges to Belgium and Holland using Nazi ships. By 1936, the World Zionist Organization began to sell Hitler’s goods in Britain.”⁵

Weizmann himself justified the Zionist leadership’s unwillingness to resist the Nazis in the usual context of order of priorities: “The only dignified and really effective reply to all that is being inflicted upon the Jews of Germany is the edifice erected by our great and beautiful work in the Land of Israel.”⁶ Baruch Charney Vladeck, the Chairman of the Jewish Labour Committee, told a defender of Zionist–Nazi collaboration before a Jewish crowd in New York, in December 1935: “You may argue from now till Doomsday, but this is double book-keeping of the most flagrant sort. That nobody should break the boycott but the Jews of Palestine! And nobody deal with Germany but the Zionist Organization! . . . It is my contention that the main purpose of the Transfer is not to rescue Jews from Germany but to strengthen various institutions in Palestine . . . ”⁷

Meeting with Adolf Eichmann

Zionist collaboration with the Nazis went beyond the Transfer Agreement. In February 1937, a Haganah representative, Feivel Polkes, arrived in Berlin to negotiate with the Security Services of the SS a Zionist offer to spy for the Nazis. Polkes was assigned Adolf Eichmann as his negotiating partner. The SS expressed interest in inside information on Jewish plots against the lives of prominent Nazis in return for SS help to pressure German Jews to go to Palestine and nowhere else.

In October of the same year, Eichmann arrived in Palestine with another SS agent, Herbert Hagen, disguised as German journalists. They were met by their agent, Franz Reichert, and by their Haganah contact, Polkes. The British were aware of the ring and two days later

arrested and expelled the two German spies to Egypt, where Polkes followed them. On October 10 and 11 important discussions were held between the two SS agents and the Zionist military rep at Cairo's Café Groppi. Polkes told the two Nazis: "The Zionist state must be established by all means and as soon as possible . . . When the Jewish state is established according to the current proposals laid down in the Peel paper, and in line with England's partial promises, then the borders may be pushed further outwards according to one's wishes."⁸

He added: "In Jewish nationalist circles people are very pleased with the radical German policy, since the strength of the Jewish population in Palestine would be so far increased thereby that in the foreseeable future the Jews could reckon numerical superiority over the Arabs in Palestine."⁹

The Zionists were far more interested in German-Jewish capital than in German Jewish immigrants who were considered too old, too assimilated, did not speak Hebrew, and generally did not possess the 'right' trades needed for Palestine. Emigration was geared towards the service of Zionist goals not the humanitarian needs of Jewish refugees. Enzo Sereni, the Labour Zionist emissary to Germany in 1933, spelled out the criteria for selection of the right immigrants wanted by the Zionists: "Even in this difficult hour [the Nazis were already in power] we must allot most of the 1,000 immigration certificates to pioneers. This may seem cruel, but even if the British were to grant 10,000 certificates instead of the 1,000 they are giving us now, we would still say: let the young people go, for even if they suffer less than the older ones, they are better fitted for the task in Palestine."¹⁰

As one Israeli historian put it: "The tendency to see the Jews of Europe as 'human material' necessary to establish the state, rather than seeing the state as a means to save the Jews, guided the Zionist leadership in setting its immigration policy. Given the choice, Ben-Gurion said, he would opt for young immigrants, not old ones and not children – children would be born in Palestine."¹¹

The task of building a Zionist Palestine seemed more urgent than saving the lives of the Jewish children in Nazi Germany: "If I knew that it was possible to save all the children in Germany by transporting them to England," said Ben-Gurion in December 1938 a short time after Kristallnacht, "but only half of them by transporting them to Palestine, I would choose the second – because we face not only the reckoning of those children but the historical reckoning of the Jewish people."¹²

Poland was the Zionists' largest pool of human resources and the Zionists did not want to weaken it in favour of German Jews. Consequently, the Zionists gave only 22% of immigration certificates to German Jews throughout the 1930s.¹³ The majority of Jewish immigrants to Palestine continued to be Slavic. Indeed, for the period 1932–35 Jewish immigrants to Palestine from Germany amounted to less than 12% of the total, with Polish Jewish immigrants representing about 43%.

The Palestinian Arabs saw in the small percentage of Jewish immigrants from Germany proof that the Zionists were wrestling political advantage from the Nazi disasters to accomplish one thing: the seizure of Palestine and its rapid transformation into a Zionist state.¹⁴ And yet, recalled Christopher Sykes in explaining the arguments Arab nationalists presented to him and to other British officials: "while the Palestinian Arabs were expected, as a result of European crimes, to make room in their very small country for nearly 145,000 Jews, the British in the same space of time, from 1932 to 1935, had only made room in their very much larger and richer country for less than 3,000 Jews".¹⁵

Similarly, during the seven-year Hitler regime which preceded World War II, 200,000 Jewish immigrants were admitted to Palestine whereas the United States, an infinitely vaster and richer country, admitted only 92,000 Jewish immigrants during the same period.¹⁶ Equally, between 1925 and 1945, under British colonial protection, 400,000 Jewish immigrants were admitted to Palestine whereas the United States admitted only 250,000 in the same period.¹⁷

Palestinian Arab leaders repeatedly told the British that it was fundamentally unfair to try to make Palestine pay the price for Hitler, who had come to power as a result of a European crisis in which the Arabs had no role whatsoever. If there was a duty to relieve the suffering of the Jews in Europe, it surely fell on the Europeans not on the Arabs. As one Arab official and historian put it: "the treatment meted out to Jews in Germany and other European countries is a disgrace to its authors and to modern civilization but . . . the cure for the eviction of Jews from Germany is not to be sought in the eviction of the Arabs from their homeland".¹⁸

Between 1931 and 1936 the Jewish population in Palestine doubled, largely as a result of increased mass immigration to Palestine. In 1931, Jews constituted some 16 to 17% of the total population of Palestine; by 1936 their numbers had increased to represent 28% of the population.¹⁹

The Palestinian Arabs were angry, alarmed and helpless, as they watched the demographic transformation of their country while the British authorities denied them self-determination and independence.²⁰

NOTES

- 1 Lenni Brenner, *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators* (London: Croom Helm, 1983), p. 267.
- 2 Lenni Brenner, *Zionism*, op. cit., p. 48.
- 3 Ibid., p. 52.
- 4 Lenni Brenner, *Zionism*, op. cit., p. 65.
- 5 Ibid., p. 65.
- 6 Ibid., p. 71.
- 7 Quoted in ibid., pp. 73–74.
- 8 Klaus Polkehn, “The Secret Contacts: Zionism and Nazi Germany 1933–41”, *Journal of Palestine Studies* (Spring 1976), p. 74, quoted in Brenner, p. 99.
- 9 Heinz Hohne, “The Order of the Death’s Head”, p. 337, quoted in Brenner, “Zionism”, op. cit., p. 99.
- 10 Quoted in ibid., p. 144.
- 11 Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs Under the British Mandate* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000). Translated from the Hebrew 2000, p. 394.
- 12 Ibid., p. 394.
- 13 Ibid., p. 87.
- 14 Christopher Sykes, *Crossroads to Israel* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1965), p. 137. See also Albert Haymson, *Palestine Under Mandate: 1920–1948* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1976), pp. 68–69.
- 15 Sykes, *Crossroads to Israel*, op. cit., p. 138.
- 16 David Waines, *A Sentence of Exile: The Palestine/Israeli Conflict, 1897–1977* (Wilmette, Illinois: The Medina Press, 1977), p. 89.
- 17 Norman and Helen Bentwich, *Mandate Memories: 1918–1948* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965). p. 173.
- 18 George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1938), p. 411.
- 19 See Janet Abu-Lughod, “The Demographic Transformation of Palestine”, in Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, *The Transformation of Palestine* (Evanston: Northwest University Press, 1971), pp. 139–63, p. 151.

6

Clashes and Enquiries, 1921–31

When riots broke out in Palestine on an anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, Sir John Shuckburgh, the Head of the Middle East Department of the Colonial Office advised Churchill to give up talking to the Arabs and to deal with them firmly because “Being Orientals, they will understand an order, and if once they realize that we mean business, may be expected to acquiesce.”¹

The Zionist response to any British attempt to gain the cooperation of the Arabs was usually to urge greater support for Zionism, while impressing on the administration not to grant the Palestinian Arabs self-governing institutions. Samuel, however, had already concluded that the Zionist project could not succeed without the acquiescence of the Arabs, even if all of his administration were staffed with pro-Zionist officials. In a letter to Weizmann in August 1921, he conceded that many British officials in Palestine were opposed to Zionism and were not “prepared to carry out with any goodwill, a policy which is likely to result in a regime of coercion. But if the whole of the present staff were changed and replaced by others chosen by yourself, in six months the newcomers would hold precisely the same view.”²

Samuel, who came to visit England in May 1922, therefore drew up a statement of policy reflecting his strategy of advancing Zionist plans with the cooperation of the Arabs. The statement, approved by Churchill and the Cabinet, was published as a White Paper in June, 1922. It sought to reassure the Arabs by stressing that “Phrases have been used such as that Palestine is to become ‘as Jewish as England is English’. His Majesty’s Government regard any such expectation as impracticable and have no such aim in view. Nor have they at any time contemplated, as appears to be feared by the Arabic Delegation, the disappearance or the subordination of the Arabic population, language or culture in Palestine.”³

While this appeared to be designed to calm Arab fears of Zionist domination, the White Paper also reiterated its support for the Balfour Declaration and stated that it intended to ensure that Jewish immigrants feel that they are in Palestine “as of right and not on sufferance”.⁴ But the White Paper did not explain what right entitled the Jewish citizens of other countries to freely immigrate to Palestine. Jeffries recorded his surprise thus: “As for the immigrants’ passport into Palestine ‘of right and not on sufferance’ upon which was scaffolded the whole edifice of prospective Palestinianism and of Jews returning to the lands of the Philistines, that ‘right’ was one which not one line in one code of law in the entire universe justified. ‘Sufferance’ too, so ingeniously employed, with its suggestions of suffering and of contemptuous treatment, was in reality the common lot of any man going to settle in a country which was not the place of his birth . . . ‘Of right and not on sufferance’ was nothing more but a phrase concocted to permit aliens to disembark at Jaffa or Haifa as natives . . .”⁵

In July 1922, Samuel went a step further by submitting to Churchill a draft statute designed to recognize the Jewish community in Palestine as having a “juridical personality”. The proposal was first rejected but, upon renewed representations from Samuel, was adopted in 1925 by the pro-Zionist Secretary of State for the Colonies Leopold Amery and his Under-Secretary, William Ormsby-Gore, despite the strong objections of the senior civil servants in the Department.⁶

Astutely, the Zionists accepted the 1922 White Paper with some reservations as usual. The fifth Palestine Arab Congress, meeting at Nablus in August 1922, rejected the British statement as well as the unilateral promulgation by the government of a Palestine constitution by an Order-in-Council. The Samuel government’s attempt to hold elections for the proposed legislative council despite an Arab leadership boycott proved a fiasco. The question now for the British government was no longer whether to continue the Balfour Declaration, but how to get the Arabs to acquiesce in its implementation. The failure of the election was therefore followed by a proposal to appoint in Palestine an Arab Agency to consult with the government. But unlike the Jewish Agency, the members of the Arab Agency were to be appointed by the High Commissioner, who would directly control the Agency.

Samuel presented the Arab Agency proposal to twenty-six Arab notables on October 11, 1923. Speaking for the Arab leaders, Musa

Kazim Pasha al-Husseini rejected the proposal as falling short of the demands of the Palestinian Arab majority. Arab leaders remained suspicious that all the British wanted to do was to lull the Arabs into acquiescence. With the failure of these attempts by the Arab leaders to demand a more equal part in their governance, Mandated Palestine from 1923 onwards was essentially governed by pro-Zionist British administrations conscious of Zionist power in London, and anxious to find ways to appease the growing anger of the Palestinian Arabs who were held captive while their country was being gradually transformed despite their opposition.

The situation was all the more discouraging for the Arabs given that no help could be expected from the League of Nations, in whose name the Mandate for Palestine was supposedly administered. To Arab protests against the terms of the Mandate and the administration of the Mandate, the League of Nations' Mandate Commission declared, as it did in July and December of 1924, that it was incompetent to discuss the character of the Mandate. It proposed some further investigation and felt assured that the Mandate was working as intended. The Arab petitioners were informed of the conclusion of the investigation. As Jeffries observed: "The Arabs, in fact, were not allowed to appeal upon anything fundamental: they were like innocent prisoners forbidden to appeal against their sentence, only permitted to complain if their treatment in prison transgressed regulations."⁷

The Palestine Arab national movement was shocked into active opposition to the Balfour Declaration and to the pro-Zionist policies of British governments in Palestine. Its leaders maintained a united front of opposition, boycott, non-cooperation and representations to London from 1920 until 1923, when under the pressure of repeated failures and internal dissensions aggravated by traditional family rivalries, the movement split into rival factions. It would not be able to reunite again until 1928.⁸

In the interval, the Zionist settlers and the colonial administration had no difficulty in accomplishing two important goals: frustrating Palestinian Arab demands for self-government, and consolidating the Zionist programme with dramatic increases in Jewish immigration to Palestine occurring in 1925 and 1926. Confronted by their success and the weakness and divisions of the Arab opposition, the Zionists were in high spirits. Thus, Weizmann was able to tell the Zionist General

Council, meeting in London on July 26, 1926, about ambitious Zionist designs for Palestine and beyond. Reporting on his talk with M. de Jouvenel, French High Commissioner in Syria, on Zionist requests to colonize the Huran (Syrian Golan Heights), Weizmann told the meeting that he “was convinced that the Jewish state, whatever form it would take, would extend from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean Sea, and it was our duty to achieve this. M. de Jouvenel’s proposal for the colonization of the Huran fell in with this idea, and it would do much good if it were pursued tactfully and carefully.”⁹ Tact, grand design, and careful preparation, were essential ingredients of the strategy of deception and force to accomplish the enormous task of “taking over the country”.

More Clashes and More Commissions of Inquiry

In September 1925, Lord Herbert Plumer succeeded Sir Herbert Samuel as High Commissioner in Palestine, a position he held until 1928. These were years of relative tranquillity largely because Arab fears of a Zionist takeover of Palestine had somewhat subsided as a result of a decline in Jewish immigration to Palestine. This was not due to any change of policy on the part of Lord Plumer, whose administration ensured “the uninterrupted pursuit of the policy of establishing the Jewish National Home”.¹⁰ It was rather the result of a serious economic crisis in Poland, the main source of Jewish immigrants to Palestine. Sir Plumer, quietly and apolitically managed to frustrate Arab demands for a legislative council until he was succeeded, in December 1928, as High Commissioner, by Sir J. R. Chancellor.

Before leaving for Palestine, Sir John Chancellor had declared his opposition to self-government but shortly after his assumption of power in Palestine he became convinced that unless the Arabs were allowed a say in the government in some form, opposition to his government would assume a violent form.

The Palestinian Arab national movement was getting over its divisions and the seventh Palestine Arab Congress, originally scheduled to convene in June 1924, finally met in Jerusalem in June 1928. The Palestine Arab National Party was founded in 1923 under the leadership of the Nashashibi faction to compete with the Palestine Arab Executive (which had grown out of the Palestine Arab Congress held in Haifa in December 1920 and claiming to represent all classes and all creeds of

the Arab people of Palestine and was presided over by Musa Kazim Pasha al-Husseini). The Husseinis' bid for leadership of the Arab nationalist movement against their rivals the Nashashibis was strengthened when in addition to the leadership of the Arab Executive, another al-Husseini, al Hajj Amin al-Husseini, was made Head of the Supreme Muslim Council and Mufti of Jerusalem.

The National Party had the same goals (of ending the Zionist programme and attaining Palestinian independence) as its rival the Palestine Arab Executive, but advocated different means. It was prepared to accept the reality of British Mandatory rule and was willing to work within the system to reach its objectives. It quickly captured the initiative from the Palestine Arab Executive, which faded out by 1927. The seventh Palestine Arab Congress passed a number of resolutions dealing with economic, social and educational issues reflecting the rising tension and the impact of the growth of Zionism on Arab society. The Congress's main resolution dealt again with the Palestinian demand for self-governing institutions: "The people of Palestine", read the resolution, "cannot and will not tolerate the present absolute colonial system of Government, and urgently insist upon and demand the establishment of a representative body to lay its own Constitution and guarantee the formation of a democratic parliamentary Government."¹¹

The very nature of the Mandate, however, precluded the satisfaction of Arab demands for self-government and this was candidly recognized by an official of the League of Nations. Responding to yet another Arab protest, M. Rappart, acting as rapporteur for the League of Nations Mandates Commission's session of a Palestine Report, frankly declared in 1928: "Mandate absolutely excluded parliamentary democratic government of Palestine by its inhabitants, because it conferred certain powers on the Mandatory, in regard of that territory, which were incompatible with the sovereignty of a free government."¹²

The Congress agreed on a new scheme for a legislative council which it presented to Sir John Chancellor, the new High Commissioner, who promised to present it to London during his leave in the summer. He also promised to impress upon the Colonial Office the difficulties of delaying Arab demands for an elective parliament.

It was during Chancellor's absence that violence broke out in Palestine and pushed aside the proposals for an elective parliament. Arab-Jewish clashes were prompted by a Jewish demonstration at the

Wailing Wall, a sacred site for both Muslims and Jews. The Wailing Wall and its compound had been under Muslim administration and were governed by a set of rules and agreements collectively referred to as the status quo. Upon entering Palestine, Allenby had assured the Palestinians that the status quo would be respected. The Zionists, however, constantly challenged the status quo and came to look at wresting the Wailing Wall from Muslim control as a symbol of their growing power in Palestine. Arab resistance to Zionist challenges of the status quo was also looked upon as a symbol of Arab determination to keep Palestine Arab.

On August 15, 1929, a massive Jewish demonstration was provocatively organized at the Wailing Wall. The next day the Arabs responded with a similar demonstration. In the charged and tense atmosphere of attacks and counter-attacks, the mob went berserk. When it was all over 133 Jews and 116 Muslim and Christian Palestinians had been killed with hundreds wounded. American Consul-General Paul Knabenshue in Jerusalem telegraphed his assessment to the State Department: "Moslem attacks were precipitated by provocative acts of the Jews."¹³

The spontaneous nature of the Arab riots and attacks suggested, for the first time, the extent of the revolutionary potential of the Arab masses. This was a development that unsettled all parties concerned: the Zionists, who would respond more aggressively throughout the 1930s; the British, who would appoint Commissions of Inquiry, only to repudiate their own recommendations in the face of Zionist pressure and fall back on more repressive measures against the Palestinian people; and the Arab leadership itself, which feared the loss of its own position to Arab peasants and workers whose position had become intolerable in the face of their own dispossession and the dislocation of their society.

Shortly, after the outbreak of riots in August 1929, a manifesto signed by Arab leaders including the leaders of the two rival factions, Musa Kazim al-Husseini and al-Hajj Amin al-Husseini, and Raghib al-Nashashibi, appealed to the Arab masses to give up violence and be more patient: "We call upon you, O Arabs, in the interest of the country, which you place above all other considerations, to strive sincerely to quell the riot, avoid bloodshed and save life. We request you all to return to quiet and peace, to endeavour to assist in the restoration of order and turn a deaf ear to such unfounded reports and rumours. Be confident that we are making every possible effort to realize your demands and national aspirations by peaceful methods."¹⁴

However, the Arab nationalist movement was being overwhelmed from below by younger generations dissatisfied with the failures of their leaders and angry at the gradual transformation and disruptions of their society as their leaders watched helplessly. The mobilization from below drew support from the disaffected youth, the dispossessed farmers and the unemployed urban middle classes, and pressured the leadership into increasingly militant positions, which eventually led to the General Strike of 1936 and the Revolt of 1937–39. If things in Palestine did not go their way, the Zionists were quick to fix any problem by applying pressure directly on the British government in London. The Palestinians had no such power and were disillusioned to see that their peaceful pleas for self-governing institutions, even when heard with sympathy in Palestine, fell on deaf ears in London. The Palestinian masses were left with the impression that, as Zionist supporter and British MP Richard Crossman once stated: “the only way the Arabs can get a hearing is through violence”.¹⁵

The British government responded, as it had done in the past, by appointing a Commission of Inquiry headed by Sir Walter Shaw. One immediate result was the decision by the High Commissioner, on September 1, to suspend negotiations with the Palestinian Arabs for the legislative assembly.

This was a setback for the Arab leadership, particularly the Arab Executive whose efforts to bring about self-governing institutions were frustrated by the British. However, it was naturally a victory for the Zionists since they were actively engaged in frustrating Arab demands for any form of self-government.

The violent clashes ushered in a new era of more intense Zionist–Palestinian Arab confrontation. Despite this, Arab opposition parties continued to emphasize the need for a positive policy as opposed to the negative policy of rejecting the government’s proposals. Thus, they asserted their readiness to accept less than full independence.¹⁶

The Zionists were in no mood for compromise, much less cooperation with the Arabs for the establishment of proportionate self-governing institutions. Shortly after the Wailing Wall clashes, Weizmann presented, on September 23, 1929, the British government with a list of Zionist demands: the arming of Jews and their introduction into the Defence Forces of Palestine; and concrete steps to allow for increased Jewish immigration and colonization of Palestine.

An Arab delegation arrived in London on March 30, 1930, and presented Arab demands to the British government: an immediate cessation of Jewish immigration to Palestine; and the establishment of a democratic government with proportionate representation in Palestine. The Arabs, however, simply had no influence in London. They had no supporters, no powerful Arab–British community, no Arab Members of Parliament, and generally speaking represented a political factor that a calculating Prime Minister could afford to ignore. It was no surprise therefore, when the British government rejected their demands.

The difficulty arose, though, when the British government's own commission seemed to vindicate Arab demands, as the Haycraft Commission had done in 1921. Indeed, the Shaw Commission that investigated the causes of the 1929 clashes concluded that: "The fundamental cause, without which in our opinion disturbances either would not have occurred or would have been little more than a local riot, is the Arab feeling of animosity and hostility towards the Jews . . . based on the two fold fear of the Arabs that by Jewish immigration and land purchase they may be deprived of their livelihood and in time pass under the political domination of the Jews."¹⁷

The Shaw Commission also found that there was "incontestable evidence that in the matter of immigration there has been a serious departure by the Jewish authorities from the doctrine accepted by the Zionist Organization in 1922 that immigration should be regulated by the economic capacity of Palestine to absorb new arrivals".¹⁸ The report recommended a clear definition of British policy based on the assumption that "the rights and position of non-Jewish communities in Palestine are to be fully safeguarded".¹⁹ It stressed that "the dispossessed tenant in Palestine is unlikely to be able to find alternative land to which he can remove".²⁰ The report recommended that it was "vitally important that . . . the present tendency towards the eviction of peasant cultivators from the land be checked . . ." and warned that "the absence of any measure of self-government is greatly aggravating the difficulties of the local administration".²¹

The Shaw Commission Report recommended that the government should make a clear statement regarding Jewish immigration, and should review the machinery for its regulation and control with the object of "preventing a repetition of the excessive Jewish immigration of 1925 and 1926",²² and that non-Jewish communities should be consulted as if

there had been a legislative council. The report also recommended: "That His Majesty's Government should re-affirm the statement made in 1922 that the special position assigned to the Zionist Organization by the Mandate does not entitle it to a share in any degree in the government of Palestine."²³

The Shaw Report confirmed a pattern that was to develop with disturbing consistency. In the words of Christopher Sykes: "A royal commission goes out to the troubled land; its recommendations lead to the sending of a subsidiary commission to make definitive proposals on how to put the recommendations into effect; the proposals conflict with too much of settled conviction and involve too much political risk to be acted on; both commissions prove to have been a waste of talent and time."²⁴

Zionist Pressure on the Labour Government

As expected, the British government reacted to the Shaw Report by appointing Sir John Hope Simpson to head another commission to inquire into land settlement in, and immigration to, Palestine. After spending three months in Palestine, Sir John presented his report, which was published, along with a government statement of policy based on its conclusion, on October 20, 1930. The Hope Simpson Report started out by setting forth in detail the geography of Palestine and the role of agriculture in its economy. It then stressed that "it is an error to imagine that the Government is in possession of large areas of vacant lands which could be made available for Jewish settlement".²⁵

The Report traced the cause of Arab anger to the Zionists' deliberately racial and exclusivist policy of land acquisition and cultivation in Palestine: "the result of the purchase of land in Palestine by the Jewish National Fund has been that land has been extra-territorialized. It ceases to be land from which the Arab can gain any advantage now or in the future. Not only can he never hope to lease or to cultivate it, but by the stringent provisions of the lease of the Jewish National Fund, he is deprived for ever from employment on that land. The land is in mort-main and inalienable. It is for this reason that Arabs discount the professions of friendship and good will on the part of the Zionists in view of the policy which the Zionist Organization deliberately adopted . . . The principle of the persistent and deliberate boycott of Arab labour in

the Zionist colonies is not only contrary to the provisions of the Mandate, but it is, in addition, a constant and increasing source of danger to the country.”²⁶

Sir John concluded that agricultural immigration to Palestine should not be permitted and that, in the long run and with different cultivation and irrigation methods, there should be enough room in Palestine for 20,000 more immigrants. The British government’s statement of policy based on the Hope Simpson Report was published by Lord Passfield as a White Paper. It reiterated the statement in the Churchill Memorandum of 1922 and affirmed that the promises made to the two sections of population of Palestine were of equal weight. It also promised that “the establishment of a measure of self-government in Palestine must be taken in hand without further delay”. The White Paper also stated that “in estimating the absorptive capacity of Palestine at any time account should be taken of Arab as well as Jewish unemployment in determining the rate at which Jewish immigration should be permitted”.²⁷

The Hope Simpson Report and the British government White Paper infuriated the Zionists who immediately launched a campaign both in the United States and in Britain designed to pressure the government to abandon its own policy recommendations. Weizmann started “an intense struggle with the Colonial Office”.²⁸ The government was flooded with a deluge of protests from Zionist leaders and Zionist supporters, with many powerful political figures such as Stanley Baldwin, Sir Austin Chamberlain, Leopold Amery and General Jan Smuts attacking the Passfield White Paper “as inconsistent with the Mandate”.²⁹

The pressure “quickly scared the Labour government first into modification then into recantation”.³⁰ Prime Minister Ramsey MacDonald gave in to Zionist pressure and sent Weizmann a letter, which, in the words of Israeli historian Yehoshua Porath, “amounted to a practical cancellation of the White Paper”.³¹ In effect, the British Prime Minister agreed to “a complete repudiation of his policy”.³² MacDonald committed the British government to more support for continued Zionist colonization of Palestine.

The capitulation of the Prime Minister of Britain to Zionist pressure discredited the leadership of the Palestinian Arab national movement in the eyes of the masses and hastened the process of radicalization. MacDonald’s letter to Weizmann repudiating his own government’s

stated policy came to be known by the Arabs as the 'black letter'. It strengthened the position of the Muslim activists and Pan-Arabists in the Palestine national movement who argued that their movement must be more militant, using direct actions directed against the British.³³

The British government dilemma was obvious. On the one hand, it had been clearly established and publicly broadcast by the Hope Simpson Report that there were no available vacant land in Palestine to accommodate the government's commitment to continued Jewish immigration to Palestine. On the other hand, Ramsey MacDonald had just retreated from his own government commission's report and given in to Zionist pressure to continue support for Zionist colonization of Palestine. This could only mean the public acceptance of further dispossession of Palestinian Arab farmers to make room for new Jewish immigrants or the development of an ambitious scheme for new intensive agricultural settlement.

To inquire into the feasibility of the latter option, the government appointed Lewis French as a one-man commission. French had done similar work in India where Punjab peasants, like Palestinian farmers, were having their land sold over their heads. French was to draw up a scheme for the resettlement of the dispossessed and displaced Palestinian Arab farmers and ascertain how much state and other land could be made available for settlement by Jewish immigrants to Palestine, and at what cost.

After completing his task, French handed in his report in two sections, one in December 1931, the other in April 1932. The first section confirmed the earlier findings of the Hope Simpson Report. His second section further deepened the conclusions of the first one. Together they led French to affirm: "I incline to the belief that little or no land of any cultural worth in any State Dominion is now likely to be discovered which is not subject already to hereditary or to analogous tenancy rights The current belief that the Government has command of large areas is a delusion . . . There is no vast virgin lands. Every suitable dunam is already subject to proprietary right or tenancy, and will have to be expropriated in some way or another." Prophetically, French concluded: "If the process of dispossession continues, in another three or four decades the Arab peasant-proprietor will have become extinct."³⁴

There was thus no stopping the policy of expropriating Palestinian Arab farmers' land to make way for new Jewish immigrants. The fact that the recommendations of the French report, like those before it, did

not lead the coalition government, which succeeded MacDonald's Labour government in August 1931, to any action to stop the process of transformation of Palestine, was another indication of Zionist power in London.

Zionist power was further demonstrated when Prime Minister MacDonald consulted Weizmann on the appointment of a new High Commissioner to replace Sir John Chancellor. With Weizmann's blessings, Sir Arthur Wauchope was appointed High Commissioner to Palestine, and under him the Zionists made their greatest advance.³⁵ "It was Sir Arthur Wauchope's almost avowed policy", recalled Albert Haymson, former Director of Immigration in Palestine, "to approve as large an immigration as the country could possibly bear. But the Zionists were still not satisfied. Side by side with the great expansion of legal immigration there grew up a system of illegal immigration."³⁶

Thus, from 4,075 in 1931 the number of Jewish immigrants admitted to Palestine more than doubled in 1932 to reach 9,553. This number more than tripled to reach 30,327 in 1933. This was in turn doubled by 1935 to reach 61,854 Jewish immigrants officially admitted to Palestine.³⁷ In four years a total of 144,093 Jewish immigrants were admitted into Palestine, whereas in the same period the United States allowed only 14,118 Jewish immigrants.³⁸

A proud Weizmann would later write in his autobiography: "It was under MacDonald's letter to me that the change came about in the Government's attitude, and in the attitude of the Palestine Administration which enabled us to make the magnificent gains of the ensuing years. It was under MacDonald's letter that Jewish immigration into Palestine was permitted to reach figures like forty thousand for 1934 and sixty-two thousand for 1935, figures undreamed of in 1930. Jabotinsky, the extremist, testifying before the Shaw Commission, had set thirty thousand a year as a satisfactory figure."³⁹

The failure of the leaders of the Palestine national movement to achieve even modest goals, as illustrated by the 'black letter' episode, was seized upon by the Mufti, Hajj Amin al-Husseini, to challenge the authority of the Arab Executive, which quickly disintegrated after the death, in 1934, of its leader Musa Kazim Pasha, whose disappearance removed his moderating influence on the Palestine national movement.

At the Islamic Congress convened in Jerusalem in December 1931, Hajj Amin al-Husseini decided to internationalize the Palestine question.

He asserted himself as the supreme and powerful spokesman for the Palestinian Arabs, and called for a strengthening of the sense of Muslim solidarity, particularly Indian Muslim solidarity with their Palestinian brethren. The Mufti's calls for religiously inspired national solidarity did not go unnoticed, and Chancellor understood that unless the British government modified its support for Zionism, the government in Palestine would be faced with more bloody riots and clashes. He therefore urged the British Cabinet to alter the direction of its policy.

This also happened to be the period during which Vladimir Jabotinsky's extremist ideas were in the ascendancy within the Zionist movement, and Weizmann's vague statements about the possibility of a sensible accord with the Arabs ceased to be used. By the end of the 1920s, it may be said that even the most diplomatic of the Zionist leadership no longer had any Arab policy.⁴⁰ Indeed, following the 1929 clashes, the *Brit Shalom* (the 'Covenant of Peace') movement, founded for the promotion of cooperation with the Arabs and the ultimate establishment of a bi-racial, bi-national state in Palestine, and opposed to the exclusion of Arab labour from Jewish enterprise, came under increasing attack. Although the *Brit Shalom* counted among its members Dr Judah Magnes, President of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Dr Louria, the Head of the Jewish Education Authority, its members were attacked by the mainstream Zionists as "unreal sentimentalists and traitors to the national cause".⁴¹

The Labour group led by the activist Zionist David Ben-Gurion gained control of the Jewish Agency in its 1933 elections. The gradualist approach came to an end. The Zionist strategy entered a stage of evolution, which led it to lay down the structures and plans for the establishment of a Jewish state. The change of strategy was based on a realistic and shrewd assessment of the relationship of power between the Zionist settlers and the indigenous Palestinian people.

In a confidential letter to Weizmann on June 22, 1932, Chaim Arlosoroff, Director of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, outlined what would become a blueprint for the new Zionist strategy. Zionist policy, he stressed, should be based on a clear assessment of "the relationship of forces of the two peoples contending in this country". At that time, "the Arabs are no longer strong enough to destroy our position but still consider themselves strong enough to establish an Arab state in Palestine . . .". Arlosoroff pointed out that the next stage

would be attained when Zionist power has grown to ensure that “the relationship of the real forces will be such as to preclude any possibility of the establishment of an Arab state in Palestine”.⁴²

This would be followed by a third stage, which would be attained when “the Arabs will be unable to frustrate the growth of the Jewish community . . .”. Under the circumstances, Arlosoroff concluded: “Zionism cannot be realized without a transition period during which the Jewish minority would exercise organized revolutionary rule . . . during which, the state apparatus, the administration and the military establishment would be in the hands of the minority in order to eliminate the danger of domination by the non-Jewish majority . . .” Arlosoroff recognized that this strategy “might even resemble dangerously certain political states of mind which we have always rejected”,⁴³ but he still insisted that it should be attempted before Zionism could be declared a failure.

NOTES

- 1 Quoted in Bernard Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine: The Mandatory Government and the Arab–Jewish Conflict, 1917–1929* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1978), p. 115.
- 2 Ibid., p. 141.
- 3 Royal Institute of International Affairs, Information Department Papers No. 20a, “Great Britain and Palestine: 1915–1939” (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 123.
- 4 J. M. N. Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality* (London: Longman, 1939), p. 493, and Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, op. cit., p. 119.
- 5 Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality*, op. cit., p. 495.
- 6 Wasserstein, *The British in Palestine*, op. cit., pp. 135–36.
- 7 Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality*, op. cit., p. 570.
- 8 Ann Mosely Lesch, *Arab Politics in Palestine, 1917–1939: The Frustration of a Nationalist Movement* (London: Cornell University Press, 1979), p. 82.
- 9 Quoted in Jon Kimche, *There Could Have Been Peace* (New York: The Dial Press), p. 315.
- 10 Norman and Helen Bentwich, *Mandate Memories: 1918–1948* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), p. 128.
- 11 David Waines, *The Failure of the National Resistance*, op. cit., p. 226.
- 12 Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality*, op. cit., p. 568.
- 13 Frank E. Manuel, *The Realities of American–Palestine Relations* (Washington, D. C.: Public Affairs Press, 1949), p. 302.

- 14 Matiel E. T. Mogannam, *The Arab Woman and the Palestine Problem* (London: Herbert Joseph, 1937), pp. 174–75, cited in David Waines, “The Failure of the National Resistance”, op. cit., p. 228.
- 15 David Waines, *A Sentence of Exile: The Palestine/Israeli Conflict, 1897–1977* (Wilmette, Illinois: The Medina Press, 1977), p. 64.
- 16 Yehoshua Porath, *The Palestine National Movement: From Riots to Rebellion 1929–1939* (London: Frank Cass, 1977), p. 67.
- 17 *Report of the Commission on the Palestine Disturbances of August, 1929* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1930), pp. 163–64.
- 18 Ibid., p. 161.
- 19 Ibid., p. 164.
- 20 Ibid., p. 120.
- 21 Ibid., p. 166.
- 22 Ibid., p. 112.
- 23 Ibid., p. 167.
- 24 Christopher Sykes, *Crossroads to Israel* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1965), p. 114.
- 25 *Report of a Committee on the Economic Conditions of Agriculturalists in Palestine and the Fiscal Measures of Government in Relation thereto* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1930), I, p. 54. See also Stewart Erskine, *Palestine of the Arabs* (London: George G. Harrap & Co., 1935), p. 103.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 The Royal Institute of International Affairs. “Great Britain and Palestine”, op. cit., pp. 49–50.
- 28 Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error: The Autobiography of Chaim Weizmann* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), p. 333.
- 29 Ibid., p. 333.
- 30 Sykes, *Crossroads to Israel*, op. cit., p. 117.
- 31 Yehoshua Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestine–Arab National Movement 1918–1929* (London: Frank Cass, 1974), p. 296.
- 32 Sykes, *Crossroads to Israel*, op. cit., p. 118.
- 33 Ann Mosely Lesch, *Arab Politics in Palestine*, op. cit., p. 104.
- 34 Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality*, op. cit., pp. 642–45.
- 35 Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, op. cit., p. 335.
- 36 Albert M. Hyamson, *Palestine Under the Mandate, 1920–1948* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1976), p. 132.
- 37 Ibid., p. 132. See also Israel Cohen, *A Short History of Zionism* (London: Frederick Muller, 1951), p. 255.
- 38 Walid Khalidi (ed.), *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem until 1948* (Beirut : The Institute For Palestine Studies, 1971), p. xi.
- 39 Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, op. cit., p. 335.
- 40 Sykes, *Crossroads to Israel*, op. cit., p. 122.
- 41 Bentwich, *Mandate Memories*, op. cit., p. 120.
- 42 Chaim Arlosoroff, “The Stages of Zionism and Minority National Rule”, in Walid Khalidi (ed.), *From Haven to Conquest*, op. cit., pp. 245–54. See also Walid Khalidi, “Plan Dalet: Master Plan for the Conquest of Palestine”, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. XVIII, no. I, Autumn 1988, pp. 4–70, p. 10.
- 43 Ibid.

Arab Resistance and the Peel Commission Report, 1936–1937

Reacting to British Imperialism and Zionist Colonization

It was becoming increasingly evident to the Arabs that although their riots and acts of violence brought about a recognition by the British of the sources of Arab frustration and discontent, Zionist pressure made British governments repudiate their own policy statements and Commission recommendations. London seemed unwilling, or unable, to put an end to Zionist colonization of Palestine. At the same time, Arab leaders' pleadings for representative government fell on indifferent ears. Their repeated protests to the League of Nations were of no avail; the League Council was under Britain's influence and refused to hear appeals against the character of the Mandate.

There were no legal avenues available that the Arabs had not exhausted. Conditions in Palestine had become ripe for a different response to British imperial rule and Zionist colonization. Arab leadership in Palestine had passed on his death from the 80-year old Musa Kazim to Hajj Amin al-Husseini who introduced into the Palestinian resistance movement the idea of nationalism based on religious solidarity. Under his leadership, the resistance was directed against Zionist colonization of Palestine as well as against British military occupation. Without the British occupiers, he preached, the Zionists would not have been able to slowly transform Palestine and oppress its people. The resistance must therefore direct its energy against the British occupation as well as against the Zionist colonization.

At the same time, the hostility towards the British had been intensified by the increasing sense of humiliation which the Palestinians felt as they became the only Arab community without any measure of self-government in the area. In 1931, the Anglo-Iraqi treaty had been ratified giving the Iraqis a measure of independent self-government. In June 1932 the French had been forced by anti-French uprisings to allow

a form of constitutional government to come to power in Damascus. Palestine was deliberately kept in bondage.

Palestinian Arab political leadership was more fractured than ever and by 1935 there were six different political parties competing and vying for leadership, and unable to unite and take any concerted actions against British colonial rule or the growing Zionist power. "As Jewish immigration reached its peak", observed one historian, "the Histadrut (Jewish General Labour Organization) increased its militant actions, land acquisition by the Zionist companies accelerated, and the build-up of the Haganah [the Zionist military organization] forces was no longer secret, the Arab party leaders came under strong pressure from the clubs and press to establish a united front."¹

In the autumn of 1935, the 19th Zionist Congress met in Lucerne and delegates passed a resolution against the British proposal for a legislative council for Palestine. Such a council would necessarily reflect the Arab majority and give the Palestinian Arabs a say in the affairs of Palestine, a development which the Zionists had always feared and opposed. At their Lucerne Congress, they described the proposed legislative council as "contrary to the spirit of the Mandate".² In all truth, it was, since it proposed to introduce a democratic reform, which would take account of the wishes of the people of Palestine. The mandate had not done so and was adopted, as we have seen previously, without any reference to the Arab nation and without any consultation of the wishes of the majority of the people in Palestine.

In October 1935, a huge illegal arms shipment of 800 rifles and 400,000 cartridges was discovered concealed in cement barrels. The shipment was destined for a Tel Aviv Zionist and spread panic among the Palestinian Arabs.³ A strike was called on October 26 to call attention to the gradual arming of the Zionists in Palestine. This was taking place at a time when the British were successfully and ruthlessly crushing the hesitant and desperate attempts of the Palestinian Arabs to start their own armed resistance.

Sheikh Izzeddin Qassam, a Muslim cleric in his 60s, had convinced a group of Palestinian Arabs that armed resistance was the only way to put an end to British occupation and Zionist colonization of Palestine. With rudimentary means and unbound faith in the justice of their cause, the rebels planned to carry out armed attacks against their enemies, but were forced into a premature and fatal battle with the British army.

Sheikh Qassam and several of his followers were killed in a shootout that stirred the Palestinian Arab masses, who gave Qassam a hero's funeral. The remnants of the revolutionary followers of Sheikh Qassam regrouped in the hills and organized themselves as the 'Holy Martyrs', dedicated to armed struggle to liberate Palestine. One of their actions would set in motion the chain reaction that would lead to the Arab rebellion of 1936.

In November 1935, an all-party Arab delegation headed by the Mufti presented a memorandum to the British administration calling for the establishment of a democratic government in Palestine and the immediate cessation of Jewish immigration. In February 1936, the Colonial Office responded through the High Commissioner, stating that its offer of a legislative council was a practical step towards democratic government and that the rate of Jewish immigration would be gauged according to the country's capacity. The Zionists immediately condemned the British proposals and strongly opposed the idea of a democratic government since a democratic government with an Arab majority would preclude the establishment of the promised National Home.

The debates in the two Houses of Parliament in February and March 1936 revealed the extent of opposition to the government's modest proposals for a legislative council in Palestine, and the degree of political support enjoyed by the Zionists in the British parliament. This was yet another proof, if the Arabs needed one, of the extent of Zionist influence in London.

In despair, the Arabs turned to direct action, which first took the form first of a non-violent civil disobedience campaign, and then turned into organized armed resistance. Following an attack on April 15, 1936 by the Holy Martyrs on a convoy of cars in which two Jewish passengers were killed, two Arabs were killed in Tel Aviv in apparent reprisal. Violent anti-Arab riots broke out in Tel Aviv and similar anti-British and anti-Zionist riots broke out in Jaffa.

The British authorities authorized the formation of a Jewish supernumerary force while refusing organizers of an Arab demonstration in Jaffa permission to parade. This action further inflamed the Palestinian Arabs who were outraged at the rising power of the Zionists and at the protection accorded to them by the British forces of occupation. As one historian observed: "Palestinians were alarmed at the racial overtones of the recent events. They were being blatantly attacked by foreigners who were not only living in their country but were publicly stating

their plans to take it over . . . Now the foreigners were forming an army, sanctioned by the British authorities, who in the meantime were controlling their country.”⁴

On April 25, 1936, the six Palestinian Arab political parties formed a Committee of Ten to coordinate the local strikes committees that came to be known as the Arab Higher Committee, to which Hajj Amin al-Husseini was elected president. The Mufti thus officially became the pre-eminent leader of the Palestine National Movement.

The Arabs went on a general strike, and anti-British and anti-Zionist riots broke out. The British administration responded with the proclamation of emergency measures. The general strike and the riots were noted by the British as having constituted a milestone “for they were for the first time a manifestation of Arab feeling against the Government as well as against the Jews. The cause of this seems to have been despair in the face of what the Arabs regarded as the entrenched Jewish influence in London.”⁵

Spontaneous and autonomous ‘national strike committees’ were set up in almost every major city in Palestine. The Arab Higher Committee, under the leadership of the Mufti, called for a general strike and, in an unprecedented show of unity, the Muslim and Christian population of Palestine followed the strike order and resolved to continue it until the British government satisfied Arab demands. These had been formulated by the Arab Higher Committee and addressed to the British High Commissioner. They were the usual demands: cessation of Jewish immigration; prohibition of Arab land transfer to the Jews; and the establishment of a representative national government in Palestine.⁶

The success of the general strike led the Arab Higher Committee to widen the scope of its non-violent civil disobedience campaign, which now included nationwide non-payment of taxes. In June, the senior civil servants of the British administration submitted a memorandum to the High Commissioner in which they complained that successive Commissions of Inquiry had vindicated Arab grievances but that nothing had been done to remedy them. The British government responded in the usual manner: by appointing a new Commission of Inquiry to calm Arab frustrations. Palestinian Arab leaders pointed to the long list of British commission report recommendations that remained unimplemented and unheeded, and demanded an international inquiry. The Zionists responded by filing a statement with the League of Nations’ Commission

affirming that an inquiry was unnecessary because it was obvious to the Zionists that the Arabs were not ready for self-determination and self-government. No international inquiry was undertaken.

The Arab Revolt was caused, as yet another report by another British Commission recognized, by “a general feeling of apprehension among the Arabs engendered by the purchase of land by the Jews and by Jewish immigration”.⁷

A British observer wrote that “although instigated, to some extent guided and certainly used by the political leaders of Arab Palestine, the Arab rebellion was in fact a peasant revolt, drawing its enthusiasm, its heroism, its organization and its persistence from sources within itself”.⁸ This conclusion is supported by Israeli scholar Yehoshua Porath in *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement: 1918–1929*.⁹

In response to the Arab Revolt of 1936, Zionist leaders openly debated the challenges facing the realization of their project of dispossessing the Arab people of Palestine. In the course of the debate there were some candid admissions. Zionist leader David Ben-Gurion said on May 19, 1936: “The Arabs . . . felt that they were fighting dispossession . . . The fear is not of losing land, but of losing the homeland of the Arab people, which others want to turn into the homeland of the Jewish people.”¹⁰

The Zionists conceded that the rebellion was a manifestation of the political self-assertion of the Arab Palestinian people. Instead of a “wild and fractured mob, aspiring to robbery and looting”, Ben-Gurion said, they emerged as “an organized and disciplined community, demonstrating its national will with political maturity and a capacity for self-evaluation”. Ben-Gurion then added that “were he an Arab . . . he would also rebel, with even greater intensity, and with greater bitterness and despair”.¹¹

Moshe Sharett, Arlosoroff’s successor as Director of the Jewish Agency’s Political Department, spoke in similar vein: “Fear is the main factor in all [Palestinian] Arab politics . . . There is no Arab who is not harmed by the Jews’ entry into the country.”¹²

The Zionists were successful in using the Arab strike to pressure the British authorities into giving in to many of their demands. The British government, while conscious that the Arab Revolt was motivated by fear from increased Jewish immigration, chose to respond to Arab anger by exacerbating its underlying cause. It decided to increase Jewish immigration to Palestine. The government announced that it was allotting

4,500 immigration certificates, a dramatic increase in the 3,250 certificates issued in the previous six-month period. As the *Zionist Palestine Economic Review* proudly explained: “the 4,500 quota should result in the immigration of a larger number of individuals, as each certificate allotted to married men covers a whole family unit”.¹³

The British administration also authorized the establishment of Jewish supernumerary police and a special force of constables. Initially, the constables were to be permitted to keep their arms on the condition that the Haganah, the already existing underground Jewish army, be disbanded and its illegal weapons handed over, but as the Arab rebellion intensified, the British tacitly dropped this condition. The Zionists also repeatedly urged the British government in Palestine to be more ruthless with the rebels and demanded a Jewish army which could act forcefully against the Arabs if the government found itself “too weak” to do so.

Under increased and sustained Zionist pressure, the British Palestine government also agreed to move government offices from Jaffa to Tel Aviv. The British authorities also gave the go ahead to the long-standing Zionist demand for an all-Jewish port at Tel Aviv. The latter measure strengthened the Zionist project in two ways. It inched it a step closer to the realization of an autonomous and economically viable Jewish state in Palestine; it also put the striking Arab workers of the Jaffa port out of work, thus swelling the ranks of the dispossessed and unemployed Arabs whose roots to Palestine were slowly being severed.

It was not long before the non-violent civil disobedience campaign turned into first unorganized random attacks against Zionist colonizers and British occupiers, then into organized armed rebellion. The British urged the Arabs to give up the strike and place faith in the British government. The Arabs, tired of unfulfilled pledges, demanded that the government show its good faith by stopping Jewish immigration at least until the latest Commission completed its investigation.

Pending the arrival of the latest British Commission of Inquiry, the sentiments of the disillusioned Arab population were summed up by *The Times* correspondent in Palestine when he wrote that all the Arabs were asking: “Can we trust the Government to implement the findings of the Royal Commission, if they should be in our favour, when on so many previous occasions results favourable to us have been set aside? It is unfortunate that confidence in the British sense of fair play should have been so undermined.”¹⁴

As if to drive the point home more bluntly to the Arabs, shortly after the Royal Commission left for Palestine on November 5, the British government announced that it had rejected the view that Jewish immigration should be suspended until the Commission completed its investigation. In fact, the government chose to increase its repression of the Arabs to enforce its immigration policy. It thus increased its military forces in Palestine from 10,000 to 30,000 soldiers who eventually crushed the Arab revolt, decapitated, interned and exiled its leadership. In the face of overwhelming strength and after the intervention of a number of Arab rulers and kings, the Arab Higher Committee called an end to the general strike in October 1936.

The Palestinian Arabs announced that in the face of British refusal to suspend Jewish immigration pending the conclusion of the inquiry, that they were boycotting the Commission charged with the task of examining their political and economic grievances.

In the event, Arab grievances were not fully heard, partly as a result of the Arab boycott, which was called off only a few days before the Commission's departure from Palestine, and partly because the Commission was unable to extend its stay to give a full hearing to Arab grievances. Thus, only twelve witnesses presented evidence for the Arab case during a period of five days, as against eight weeks devoted by the Commission to hear more than a hundred Jewish and British witnesses.

In London, the leader of the New Zionist Organization, Vladimir Jabotinsky testified, on February 11, 1937, before the Palestine Royal Commission. He openly stated that the aim of the Zionists in Palestine was to turn the Arab majority into a minority in their own country. He asserted that there can be no development of Palestine unless self-governing institutions were denied to the Arabs but granted to a Jewish majority in Palestine: "Wait until we are a majority there", he urged the members of the Commission, "then you have a Legislative Council, and then it will be exactly within the meaning of the word 'development'."¹⁵

One member of the Commission, Sir Laurie Hammond, noted that Jabotinsky urged that Great Britain should consult only with the Jews before terminating its Mandate in Palestine. He then enquired whether Jabotinsky omitted to refer to the Arabs by accident: "Is it a mere oversight you omitted to refer to the Arabs; two-thirds of the country belong to the Arabs at present, that there should be no consultation with them?" Jabotinsky replied: "No." Sir Laurie: "None?" Jabotinsky:

“None. The Mandate was given independently of the Arabs’ attitude; the promise called Balfour’s Declaration was given to us . . . If the Mandate could be given to, and was accepted by, Great Britain without consultation with the Arabs, why should it not be accepted by some other Power without consultation with the Arabs?”¹⁶

The Peel Commission Report

Not surprisingly, the Peel Commission Report was unfair and contradictory. The Report, which was issued in May 1937, recognized for the first time in an official British document that the promises made to the Jews and the Arabs were irreconcilable and that the Mandate was unworkable. It also recognized that the underlying causes of Arab grievances were: “(i) The desire of the Arabs for national independence; (ii) Their hatred and fear of the establishment of the Jewish National Home”, and that these causes “were the same underlying causes as those which brought about the ‘disturbances’ of 1920, 1921, 1929, and 1933 . . . The Balfour Declaration and the Mandate under which it was to be implemented involved the denial of national independence at the outset. The subsequent growth of the National Home created a practical obstacle, and the only serious one, to the concession later of national independence.”¹⁷

The authors of the Report concluded: “we are convinced that peace, order and good government can only be maintained in Palestine for any length of time by a rigorous system of repression . . . (but) that such a policy leads nowhere. However vigorously and consistently maintained, it will not solve the problem.”¹⁸

Yet, the Report went on to propose a solution which was likely to exacerbate the very underlying causes of anger and disturbances it had just identified, and in turn bring about the rigorous system of repression it concluded would lead nowhere. “Partition”, concluded the Report, “seems to offer at least a chance of ultimate peace. We can see none in any other plan.” In proposing the partition of Palestine, the Peel Commission was in effect proposing the practical implementation of what the Zionists had manoeuvred to achieve, the Arabs had revolted to resist, and the British had pledged not to permit: the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. Moreover, the Report acknowledged: “in the area allocated in our plans to the Jewish State . . . there are now about

225,000 Arabs. In the area allotted to the Arab State there are only some 1,250 Jews.” and went on to propose “transfer” of population. The Commissioners suggested that since it is “the far greater number of Arabs who constitute the major problem”, that their “transfer” be facilitated through irrigation and cultivation plans in Transjordan.¹⁹

The partition plan not only conceded the Zionist claims to Palestine which the Palestinian majority had fiercely opposed, it also proposed to establish the Jewish state the Arabs feared and the Zionists had denied wanting. It proposed to give the Zionists 40% of Palestine at a time when Jewish land holding did not exceed 5.6%.²⁰

Furthermore, such a state was to be established in the most fertile and developed area of Palestine where the majority of Arab citrus groves were located and where the Palestinian Arabs held more than four times as much land as the Zionist settlers. “The scheme”, observed one historian, “envisages the conversion of the proposed Jewish national home into a Jewish state, and the extension of the present area of Zionist colonization to an area several times its size, which includes a settled Arab population of some 300,000 souls, and in which Jewish authority would be supreme. In other words, it meets the Arab objections to the Balfour Declaration by recommending that the Zionists be given far more than was actually promised them on the broadest possible interpretation of the Declaration; and it faces the difficulties arising out of the displacement of the Arab population by recommending displacement on a much larger scale.”²¹

Transfer of the Arab Population

The Zionists understood that the expulsion of the Arabs from their native places was imperative for the success of the partition project. Ben-Gurion wrote in his diary in July 1937: “We should not assume that it [the Peel Commission proposal concerning Arab resettlement] is definitely impossible. If it were put into effect, it would be of tremendous advantage to us . . . For every transferred Arab, one could settle four Jews on the land.”²² Chaim Simons reported that: “very few people have had the courage to support publicly the transfer of Arabs from Palestine. Most leaders of the Zionist movement publicly opposed such transfers. However, a study of their confidential correspondence, private diaries and minutes of closed meetings, made available to the public under

the 'thirty year rule' reveals [that many prominent Zionist leaders] were really in favour of transferring the Arabs from Palestine."²³

The complicity of the British government in this and in other Zionist demands was not difficult to obtain, as was revealed in the record made by Weizmann of his meeting with Ormsby-Gore two days before the latter, forever the zealous pro-Zionist, introduced the Partition plan in the House of Commons on July 21, 1937. Under item No. 3, Weizmann reported that he told Ormsby-Gore: "Transfer of the Arab Population: I said that the whole success of the scheme depended upon whether the Government genuinely did or did not wish to carry out this recommendation. The transfer could only be carried out by the British Government and not by the Jews. I explained the reason why we considered the proposal of such importance. Mr Ormsby-Gore said that he was proposing to set up a Committee for the two fold purpose: (a) of finding land for the transferees – they hoped to find land in Transjordan and possibly also in the Negev . . . and (b) of arranging the actual terms of the transfer."²⁴

After going through the lengthy list of changes that Weizmann wanted to see in the Peel Commission recommendation for Partition, and noting the acquiescence of his interlocutor, he recorded: "Mr Ormsby-Gore said that his statement in the House of Commons would be vague, and he expected he would have rather a bad time."²⁵

Not surprisingly the Arabs of Palestine, and Arab leaders, gathered in a pan-Arab Congress held in Bloudan near Damascus in September 1937, rejected the partition proposal, reaffirmed the Arab character of Palestine and demanded the end of the British Mandate and independence for Palestine. The only Arab leader not to immediately declare his opposition to the partition scheme was Emir Abdullah of Transjordan, who stood to benefit from the annexation to Transjordan of the dismembered Arab portion of Palestine. After the delegates dispersed, the Palestinian and the Syrian delegates reportedly met secretly and, according to one Israeli historian, agreed on plans for the second stage of the Revolt in October 1937.²⁶

The Zionists also rejected the Peel Commission recommendation for partition. For them, it did not go far enough. They wanted all of Palestine. As the Zionists grew stronger, and the Arabs more helpless, Zionist demands became bolder and bolder. Zionist Revisionist leader Vladimir Jabotinsky had emphatically stated before the Commission: "A

corner of Palestine, a canton – how can we promise to be satisfied with it? We never can. Should we swear to you that we should be satisfied it would be a lie.”²⁷

At the 20th Zionist Congress, meeting in Zurich, Switzerland in August 1937, a majority rejected the Peel Commission partition proposal but, astutely, declared itself ready to discuss plans for the establishment of a Jewish state in part of Palestine. Most mainstream Zionist leaders accepted the notion that a Jewish State in part of Palestine was a necessary first step towards the achievement of their aim of making all of Palestine a Jewish state. David Ben-Gurion, who had openly called at the 17th Zionist Congress for the establishment of “a dynamic state bent upon expansionism”²⁸ explained the frame of mind behind the 20th Congress decision: “The Debate has not been for or against the indivisibility of the Land of Israel. No Zionist can forgo the smallest portion of the Land of Israel. The Debate concerned which of two routes would lead quicker to the common goal.”²⁹

Ben-Gurion saw partition as the first step toward a gradual takeover of the whole country on both sides of the Jordan River: “A partial Jewish state is not the end, but the beginning,” he explained to his son Amos, “a powerful impetus in our historic efforts to redeem the land in its entirety.”³⁰

On the Peel Commission recommendation to transfer Arabs out of the territory designated for Jews, Ben-Gurion could barely contain his enthusiasm. “This will give us something we never had, even when we were under our own authority, neither in the period of the First Temple nor in the period of the Second Temple,” he wrote in his diary, underlying the two decisive words: “forced transfer”.³¹

One member of the Peel Commission, Sir Laurie Hammond, correctly understood the Zionist strategy and indiscreetly appealed to it when he told a meeting of Jews on May 5, 1938: “You will find that the National Home in Palestine, if you can get sufficient numbers in that country to meet immediate requirements as a Sovereign Power, will be the first step, in my opinion, towards getting back into the rest of the country.” Then he prophetically added, “It will take many years, but it will come.”³²

NOTES

- 1 Ann Mosely Lesch, *Arab Politics in Palestine, 1917–1939: The Frustration of a Nationalist Movement* (London: Cornell University Press), p. 113.
- 2 Christopher Sykes, *Crossroads to Israel* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1965), p. 144.
- 3 Barbara Kalkas, “The Revolt of 1936: A Chronicle of Events”, in Ibrahim Abu-Lughod (ed.), *The Transformation of Palestine* (Evanston: Northwest University Press, 1971), pp. 237–74, p. 239.
- 4 Ibid., p. 241.
- 5 Ibid., p. 73.
- 6 Nevill Barbour, *Nisi Dominus: A Survey of the Palestine Controversy* (London: George G. Harap, Co, 1946), p. 166.
- 7 ‘Report of the Murison-Trusted Commission of Inquiry’, published in the *Palestine Gazette*, February 7, 1934, and quoted in The Royal Institute of International Affairs. Information Department Papers No. 20a, “Great Britain and Palestine: 1915–1939”, (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 72.
- 8 John Marlowe, *The Seat of Pilate: An Account of the Palestine Mandate* (London: The Cresset Press), pp. 137–38
- 9 Yehoshua Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement: 1918–1929* (London: Frank Crass, 1974).
- 10 Shabtai Tevet, *Ben Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs, From Peace to War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 165, quoted in Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist–Arab Conflict: 1881–1999* (London: John Murray, 1999), p. 136
- 11 Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs Under the British Mandate*, trans. from Hebrew (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000), p. 370.
- 12 See Anita Shapira, (Hebrew) *Herev ha-yonah* (Tel Aviv: ‘Am ‘oved, 1992), pp. 310–11, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 136.
- 13 *Zionist Palestine Economic Review*, vol. I, no. 6–7, June–July, 1936, p. 6, quoted in Barbara Kalkas, “The Revolt of 1936: A Chronicle of Events”, *op. cit.*, p. 254.
- 14 *The Times*, September 17, 1936, quoted in “Great Britain and Palestine”, *op. cit.*, p. 81.
- 15 M. V. Jabotinsky, *Evidence Submitted to the Palestine Royal Commission, House of Lords, London, February 11, 1937* (London: The New Zionist Press, February 1937), p. 34.
- 16 Ibid., p. 35.
- 17 *Palestine Royal Commission Report* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1937), pp. 110–11
- 18 Ibid., p. 373.
- 19 Ibid., pp. 389–91.
- 20 Walid Khalidi (ed.) *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem until 1948* (Beirut: The Institute For Palestine Studies, 1971), p. xii.
- 21 George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening: The Story of the Arab National Movement* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1938), p. 402.
- 22 See Chaim Simons, *International Proposals to Transfer Arabs from Palestine, 1895–1947: A Historical Survey* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Press, 1988), pp. 12–13.

- 23 Ibid., p. 211.
- 24 Note dated July 19, 1937, in *Jewish Chronicle* (London), August 13, 1937, quoted in Erskine B. Childers, *The Wordless Wish: From Citizens to Refugees* (Association of Arab-American University Graduates, 1973), p. 176.
- 25 J. M. N. Jeffries, *Palestine: The Reality* (London: Longman, 1939), pp. 667–68.
- 26 Yehoshua Porath, *The Palestine National Movement: From Riots to Rebellion 1929–1939* (London: Frank Cass, 1977), p. 232.
- 27 Nevill Barbour, *Nisi Domius*, op. cit., pp. 180–81.
- 28 Punyapriya Dasgupta, *Cheated by the World* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1988), p. 78.
- 29 Nevill Barbour, *Nisi Dominus*, op. cit., p. 184.
- 30 Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete*, op. cit., p. 403.
- 31 Ibid., p. 404.
- 32 *The Jewish Chronicle*, May 13, 1938, quoted in Nevill Barbour, *Nisi Dominus*, op. cit., p. 181.

The Slide to War and the Strengthening of Zionist Power, 1937–1939

The Arab Revolt Crushed

Following the publication of the partition recommendation of the Peel Commission in July 1937, four Palestinian Arabs shot and killed Lewis Andrews, the Commissioner of the Northern District, disliked for his Zionist sympathies, thus triggering off the second stage of the Revolt.

Although the killing was condemned by the Mufti Hajj Amin al-Husseini as a senseless act of brutality, the British administration seized on the incident to crack down on the Palestine national movement. It reacted with repressive measures, arresting hundreds of Arab notables, dissolving the Arab Higher Committee and deporting its members to the Seychelles, and deposing the Mufti, who escaped to Lebanon, while Jamal Husseini, founder of the Palestine Arab Party and its delegate to the Arab Higher Committee, fled to Egypt. With this development, the uprising entered its second phase of armed resistance, which reached its peak in the summer of 1938 when the rebels managed to exercise effective control over the central mountain area in Palestine, in Galilee, Hebron, Beersheba and Gaza. The rebels also attacked and disarmed British police stations, robbed banks and carried out acts of vengeance against Arab collaborators.

In July 1938, the so-called Revisionist wing of Zionism led by Vladimir Jabotinsky introduced with deadly perfection the techniques of modern terrorism by placing bombs in crowded public places in Haifa and Jerusalem. The bombing of the Haifa Melon Market alone, on July 26, killed fifty-three Arabs and one Jew. In six separate terrorist attacks of this kind one hundred innocent Arab men, women and children had been killed in the month of July alone. Arab mobs responded with acts of violence and revenge, often with indiscriminate bloody results, as in the massacre, in October 1938, of nineteen Jews in Tiberias.

But in the end the rebels' muskets were no match for the planes, tanks and logistics of the reinforced army of a great colonial power

determined to 're-conquer Palestine', with the help of the Haganah, the 'underground' Zionist army. The British administration introduced an emergency regulation making the mere carrying of a firearm a capital offence. Military courts were set up and dealt ruthlessly with Arab leaders of the rebellion. In all, 112 Arabs, and only 1 Jew, were hanged. The imposition of heavy fines and the policy of house demolition forced thousands of Palestinians to emigrate en masse, refugees in their own country. The rebellion was broken.

In all, Khalidi conservatively estimated that some 5,000 Arabs were killed, and 15,000 wounded; some 101 British died, and 463 Jews.¹ The Zionists had contributed to the defeat of the Arab rebellion, which, as N. Israeli put it: "marked the departure of Palestinians from power politics in the area, leaving the field to be occupied by the British and the Zionists".²

The Arab Revolt in Palestine differed from other Arab nationalist rebellions against British imperial domination, such as the 1919 revolt in Egypt, the 1920 uprising in Iraq and the 1925 rebellion in Syria, in that frustration against, and detestation of imperial British policy was much greater in Palestine. This was because, as A. P. Thornton noted in his classic study *The Imperial Idea*, "neither Egypt nor Iraq nor Syria had undergone an actual invasion of aliens, and although there were alien governments in those countries they were not in fact so irrevocably rooted there that an aspiring nationalist might not look forward with some confidence at least to the day when his country would be free of them. But no one could hold such an opinion or dream such a dream in Mandated Palestine. Arabs, controlled by the British, were forced to suffer the entry into their midst of the Jews, whose intention (for they saw little reason to conceal it) was to establish a foreign state in their territory, either oppressing their Arab subjects or expelling them completely."³

With the Arabs crushed, and the British government publicly in favour of the dismemberment of Palestine to carve a Jewish state in it, the question of transfer and the need for more Jewish immigrants to create some kind of a majority in the proposed Jewish state became more urgent than ever.

"You could move all your unwanted Jews into Palestine."

Revisionist Zionist leaders were hard at work trying to convince the Polish authorities that British and American politicians had tacitly endorsed

the proposal that Zionism could help solve 'their' Jewish immigration problem by redirecting Jews away from these countries and toward Palestine. Robert Briscoe, member of the Irish Parliament and leader of the New Zionist Organization in Ireland, went to Warsaw in December 1938 and was able to get an audience with Colonel Jozef Beck, the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs. Beck was scheduled to leave for London to negotiate a treaty of alliance with Britain, which was eventually signed in January 1939. Briscoe urged him to ask Britain to turn over the Mandate to Poland, effectively turning Palestine into a Polish colony and then added: "You could then move all your unwanted Jews into Palestine. This would bring great relief to your country, and you would have a rich and growing colony to aid your economy."⁴

War in Europe

In November 1938, the Woodhead Report was published. It made it clear that partition without forcible transfer of large number of Palestinians was impossible. It recommended partition along different lines which reduced the proposed Jewish state, and urged that partition be achieved through negotiations. But the world situation was changing rapidly. Arab and Muslim opposition to partition was taking on new dimensions. In October, the 'World Inter-parliamentary Congress of Arab and Moslem Countries for the Defence of Palestine' had met in Cairo and made clear its opposition to British policy in Palestine and to partition. It also made it clear that such a policy could drive the Arab and the Muslim worlds away from Britain and closer to the Axis powers.

The situation in Europe was rapidly deteriorating. British appeasement of Hitler's insatiable appetite in the Munich agreement of 1938 had bought some time at the expense of Czechoslovakia, as did the Anglo-German and the Franco-German peace pacts. But the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1936 and persistent Italian expansionist demands towards Tunisia, Corsica and Nice poisoned Franco-Italian relations and impressed on Britain the strategic importance of the Eastern Mediterranean. Accordingly, the British government became anxious to spare its resources and avoid a prolonged and violent colonial conflict in Palestine. At the same time, London saw benefits in tempering its policy of antagonizing the Arabs, who controlled strategically important areas, for the benefits of its Zionist friends. On the other hand, German persecution of Jews

added to the pressure that the Zionists were certain to bring to bear against Britain not to modify its policy of aggressive support for the Zionist project in Palestine.

With these considerations in mind and against the background of war clouds over Europe, London issued invitations to the Palestinians, neighbouring Arab states, and Zionist leaders to attend a Round Table Conference in London in February 1939. Because of Palestinian refusal to sit with the Zionist–Jewish delegation, the British met separately with Palestinian and Arab representatives and with Zionist and Jewish leaders.

However, it quickly became obvious that the gulf separating the parties was too enormous to bridge at this late hour, and the conference achieved no concrete results. It came to an end at a time when war seemed close in Europe with the German invasion of Czechoslovakia in March (the same day the conference ended March 17) and the Italian invasion of Albania in April. The British government realized, somewhat belatedly, that the policy of appeasement of Germany had failed and that war in Europe was now inevitable.

Still, the Anglo–Arab Committee, presided over by Lord Chancellor, examined the Arab case and the Hussein–McMahon agreement. Lord Chancellor, acting as the advocate of the British government, concluded that “the Arab point of view had been shown to have greater force” than had hitherto appeared. The same Committee reported unanimously that in 1918 His Majesty’s Government had not been free to dispose of Palestine “without regard for the wishes and interests of the inhabitants of Palestine”.⁵

The MacDonald White Paper, 1939

This conclusion and the rapid deterioration of the crisis in Europe set the stage for the MacDonald White Paper and the government statement of policy issued in May 1939. The statement of policy reaffirmed the interpretation given in 1922 by the then Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill that the British government “at no time contemplated the subordination of the Arabic population, language, or culture in Palestine”, and declared that: “H. M. G. believe that the framers of the Mandate . . . could not have intended that Palestine should be converted into a Jewish State against the will of the Arab population of the country . . .

“H. M. G. now declare unequivocally that it is not part of their policy that Palestine should become a Jewish State . . . their [H. M. G’s]

objective is self-government and they desire to see established ultimately an independent Palestinian State . . . in which the two peoples in Palestine, Arabs and Jews, share authority in government in such a way the essential interests of each are secured . . . Jewish immigration during the next five years will be at a rate which, if economic absorptive capacity permits, will bring the Jewish population up to approximately one third of the total population of the country . . . this would allow for the admission of some 75,000 immigrants over the next five years . . . After a period of five years no further Jewish immigration will be permitted unless the Arabs of Palestine are prepared to acquiesce in it.”⁶

Christopher Sykes wrote that since the Palestinians had justice on their side the British government could not adopt a policy of bloody repression to put an end to Arab revolts once and for all and had no alternative but to adopt a pro-Arab policy.⁷ This argument fails to convince on two accounts: first, justice had existed on the side of the Palestinians from the very beginning of the conflict, yet this did not dissuade the British government from issuing the Balfour Declaration, enforcing a pro-Zionist policy in Palestine, acquiescing in the secret armament of Zionist forces, and frustrating Arab demands for self-government; second, the British did adopt a policy of bloody repression to put an end to the Arab Revolt. What had changed in 1939 was not that the issue of justice of the Arab Palestinian cause had suddenly dawned on British policy makers, but rather, the cold geo-strategic calculations required different treatment of the Arabs.

In the war that now seemed inevitable Britain could not afford to alienate its Arab allies with continued support for a Zionist project opposed by the majority of the population in Palestine and by the Arab countries, especially Egypt, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, whose regimes Britain decided it could ill-afford to alienate. The British were essentially now realizing that the Arabs were more useful to them than the Zionists could ever be and they were serving notice on the Zionists that the realization of the Zionist design to seize Palestine could no longer be accomplished with British arms. It would have to be done with Zionist arms. But first the Zionists would have to get rid of a Mandatory Power no longer providing shield and protection but ready to erect obstacles in the path of Zionist plans.

As A. P. Thornton perceptively put it: “The desired end, therefore, could only now be attained by force of Zionist arms. These would first

have to be turned against the British, upholders of the obstructing Mandate, and then against the Arabs – not an enemy that was hated, but an inevitable enemy none the less. The Arabs made an error, in that they did not grasp that such was the Zionist outlook, and such the Zionist blueprint for the future. That the Jews could grow strong enough and confident enough to displace the British, the ‘country power’ in the Middle East and seize Palestine for themselves seemed, in 1939, an impossibility, and Arabian nightmare.”⁸

Zionist Use of Force

The Zionists had been prepared for the use of force to realize their objectives. With the consolidation of Zionist power in Palestine, the increased number of Jewish settlements, the steady flow of new Jewish immigrants and the gradual dispossession of Palestinian farmers and labours supported by British Zionist policies, the balance of power had gradually shifted. Significantly, by suppressing the Arab rebellion, the British had disarmed the rebels and broken and deported its leadership – leaving the Palestinians more vulnerable than ever politically and militarily.

We saw previously how Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann requested and received the collusion of the British leaders in the secret arming of the Zionists in Palestine. “The secret arming of the Haganah – the Jewish Defence organization which had been started by Jabotinsky in 1920,” wrote British historian John Marlowe, “had been going on throughout the whole period of the Mandate . . . the fact that Haganah arms and organization were far in excess of anything required for self-defence against Arab attacks was ignored by the military. Vis-à-vis the Civil Administration (in Palestine) the existence of Haganah as a unified force was denied and the fiction adopted that Haganah (the Hebrew word for self-defence) was simply a term used to denote the individual self-defence arrangements in the various Jewish settlement.”⁹

In addition, the Zionist forces benefited from the military genius of a certain Orde Wingate, a British officer who arrived in Palestine in 1936 and quickly showed fanatical zeal for the Zionist cause. He told suspicious Zionist officers: “I am fighting the same fight as you, with the same ideas in mind and the same goal as you. I am with you with every beat of my heart.”¹⁰

Wingate organized special night squads with Jewish recruits, including a young Moshe Dayan, whom he led in ruthless raids against Arab villages in the campaign to suppress the Arab rebellion. Referring to the Arabs, he said to his troops: "we, the Jews [sic] . . . will not rest until a fear of the night, as of the day, assails them".¹¹ Some Israelis describe Wingate as one of the founders of the Israeli army.¹²

He was, at any rate, instrumental in impressing upon the Zionist military planners the importance of mobility, surprise and offensive tactics in modern warfare; tactics which the Israelis successfully applied in taking the offensive against the Palestinians in April 1948 and in subsequent wars against the Arab states in 1956 and 1967.

The Zionist leadership understood the imperative need for self-reliance if Palestine was to be seized forcibly, and also that the geo-political realities on the eve of World War II were going to result in British vacillation. In view of the situation, the Zionist leadership pressed for the formation of a Jewish army. Winston Churchill, who had become Prime Minister in May 1940, supported the Zionist demand for the formation of a Jewish army, but all the Palestine British administration was prepared to do to placate Churchill was to authorize the Palestine Buffs (the East Kent Regiment) to recruit into each one of its six companies up to 500 Jews and 500 Arabs from Palestine. After pressure from Weizmann, London eventually authorized the creation of the Palestine Regiment, a Jewish Regiment recruited by the British authorities, not the Jewish Agency, and not armed for front-line service. This was done because the administration knew that Zionists "serving on lines of communication took the opportunity to secure arms for Haganah, and there were many cases of British soldiers corrupted into stealing and selling arms".¹³

Indeed the Jewish settlement police, which was enlarged by the British during the Arab rebellion, was largely composed of Haganah volunteers who were thus being trained by the British. In 1937, the membership of the Haganah numbered 21,000 men and women; by 1944 their numbers had risen to 37,000, and in September of the same year the British War Office finally gave in to Zionist pressure and allowed the creation of a Jewish brigade. Although the Jewish military unit did not go into action until March 1945, the experience served the Zionist plans politically and militarily.

When two British deserters were arrested in the summer of 1943, their interrogations revealed large-scale arms trafficking and implicated

leading Zionist figures including Ben-Gurion himself. Ben-Gurion responded by charging that the court acted under anti-Semitic influence. "In keeping with the new spirit of absolute uncompromise," observed Zionist sympathizer Christopher Sykes, "he [Ben-Gurion] opened a new phase in Zionist propaganda . . . : henceforth to be anti-Zionist was to be anti-Semitic; to disapprove of Jewish territorial nationalism was to be a Nazi."¹⁴

NOTES

- 1 Walid Khalidi, (ed.), *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem until 1948* (Beirut: The Institute For Palestine Studies, 1971), p. xii
- 2 N. Israeli, "Israel and Imperialism", in Arie Bober (ed.), *The Other Israel: The Radical Case Against Zionism* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co. 1972), pp. 54–64, p. 58.
- 3 A. P. Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies* (London: Macmillan, 1963), p. 341.
- 4 Robert Briscoe and Alden Hatch, *For the Life of Me* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1958), pp. 266–70.
- 5 Nevill Barbour, *Nisi Dominus: A Survey of the Palestine Controversy* (London: George G. Harap, Co, 1946), p. 200–01.
- 6 Quoted in John Marlowe, *The Seat of Pilate: An Account of the Palestine Mandate* (London: The Cresset Press, 1959), pp. 155–56.
- 7 Christopher Sykes, *Crossroads to Israel* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1965), p. 197.
- 8 A. P. Thornton, *The Imperial Idea*, op. cit., p. 342.
- 9 Marlowe, *The Seat of Pilate*, op. cit., pp. 171–72.
- 10 Leonard Mosley, *Gideon Goes to War* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), p. 54.
- 11 Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict: 1881–1999* (London: John Murray, 1999), p. 148.
- 12 Sykes, *Crossroads to Israel*, op. cit., p. 183.
- 13 Ibid., p. 231.
- 14 Sykes, *Crossroads to Israel*, op. cit., p. 247.

The Balance of Power in Palestine Shifts, 1939–1945

The Zionists reacted violently to the latest government statement of policy. In Palestine, they went on the rampage setting fire to the headquarters of the Department of Migration, attacking and pillaging government offices in Haifa and Tel Aviv and looting Arab shops in Jerusalem. A campaign of sabotage and terror was initiated against both the British and the Arabs. Militant and mainstream Zionist leaders joined in violent denunciation of the British, and in loud proclamation of the real Zionist goals in Palestine. Zionist leaders became more aggressive. David Ben-Gurion, as Chairman of the Executive of the Jewish Agency, stated on August 25, 1939, "For us the White Paper neither exists nor can exist. We must believe as if we were the State in Palestine, until we actually become that State in Palestine."¹

Ben-Gurion was fully aware of the shifting balance of power between the Arabs, leaderless and without a military organization, and the Jews, who could now afford to force an implementation of the Zionist scheme, despite belated British realization of its incompatibility with Arab rights in Palestine. The moment seemed ripe to redirect Zionist strategy against the British to force an end to the Mandate and let the Zionists themselves take care of their 'Arab problem'.

Vladimir Jabotinsky had often been officially condemned by a Zionist leadership ever sensitive to its image in the Western world, its main source of support. And even had he lived (he died in 1940) he could not have risen to the leadership of the Zionist movement given his fascist background and philosophy in an era when the Western democracies were engaged in mortal struggle against fascist power. Despite the fact that his ideas had been condemned, they would be adopted, with little modification, by the activist leaders of the Zionist movement. So, it was Ben-Gurion, the activist labour militant, who emerged to challenge

Weizmann with a new strategy, all fundamentally Jabotinskien, designed to bring all of Palestine under Zionist control.

Ben-Gurion understood that to challenge both Weizmann's leadership and build upon his personal relations with British politicians and British imperial rule, he had to harness the, as yet not fully utilized, power of the American Zionists. With Aliahu Golomb and Moshe Shertok, Ben-Gurion resolved to make America the power base of international Zionism, and to harness the financial and political power of American Jewry to make Washington pressure London into toeing the Zionist line. Ben-Gurion reported what Shertok said at a political meeting in Palestine in April 1940: "There are millions of active and well-organized Jews in America, and their position in life enables them to be centers of the country, and hold important positions in politics, trade, journalism, the theatre and the radio. They could influence public opinion, but their strength is not felt, since it is not harnessed and directed at the right target."²

The Biltmore Program, 1942

Ben-Gurion decided to galvanize American Zionists into action by defining Zionist objectives in maximalist terms and by persuading the American Zionists to adopt them. By September 1941, the Zionist Organization of America had already resolved to demand the creation of a Jewish state in the whole of Palestine. Under the sponsorship of the American Zionists, an extraordinary Zionist Conference was convened at the Biltmore Hotel in New York in May 1942.

Ben-Gurion demanded that the Jewish Agency be given full control over immigration to Palestine and that the concept of bi-nationalism be discarded if it implied giving the Palestinian Arabs equal representation with Jews in the future government.³ The conference rejected the "gradualist" approach advocated by Weizmann and endorsed the activism of Ben-Gurion and his expansionist views, which were not unlike those preached by Jabotinsky. The United States had entered the war against Germany and the American Zionist influence over the future of Palestine had increased accordingly. With the support of the increasingly militant and influential American Zionists, Ben-Gurion managed to secure the adoption of the Biltmore Program setting out maximalist demands: rejection of the British White Paper policy of restricted Jewish immigration to Palestine, and rejection of any accommodation with the Arabs, and

most significantly, a demand that “Palestine be established as a Jewish Commonwealth”.⁴

The Zionists were no longer content with ambiguous formulations such as “the establishment in Palestine of a Jewish National Home” used in the Balfour Declaration; nor were they willing to accept the vastly improved formula of a Jewish state in part of Palestine proposed by the Peel Commission. They finally and clearly stated what had been their goal all along: the conversion of all of Palestine into a Jewish state. Such a goal had been formulated in the first draft text submitted to the Lloyd George Cabinet in 1917 but non-Zionist Jewish opposition and diplomatic prudence had dictated a more tactful formula given the existing realities on the ground. Now, the Zionists determined that the balance of power had shifted in their favour and were prepared to take full advantage of it.

To dispel any doubt about the meaning of the Biltmore Program, Ben-Gurion told a meeting of Zionist workers in Palestine “this is why we formulated our demand not as Jewish state in Palestine but Palestine as a Jewish state”, and he specifically urged them “not to identify the Biltmore Program with a Jewish state in part of Palestine”.⁵

Moshe Sharett, Israel’s first foreign minister and briefly prime minister in the 1950s, explained the basis of the Zionist strategy thus: “The most crucial time for Zionism is the period of transition from Jewish minority to a majority. In this period, not the Arabs but the British and the Americans will be the decisive factors. It is not the Arabs who will have the final word, neither in the world nor here; let us not adopt the view that one has to go to the Arabs and agree with them.”⁶

Indeed, the Zionists seemed to have concluded that the only way to solve the Arab problem was to deny its existence and move towards the practical implementation of Zionist goals, which necessarily meant the subordination of the rights of the majority of the people in Palestine. In effect, through the Biltmore Program, as Hanah Arendt perceptively observed: “the Jewish minority had granted minority rights to the Arab majority”.⁷ Ben-Gurion viewed this with pride and probably believed that his achievement in getting the Biltmore Program adopted “cancelled out” Weizmann’s in getting the Balfour Declaration issued.⁸

By the beginning of 1943, the British victory at Alamein, the Russian victory at Stalingrad and the Anglo-American landing in North Africa had definitely turned the tide in favour of the Allied Powers, whose victory was now more assured. With the removal of the threat of

German invasion of the Middle East, the attention turned to the post-war settlement and the Zionists were scoring important diplomatic victories. The British Zionist Federation was successfully managing to swell the ranks of its membership and presented itself as a more representative body of British Jewry than the non-Zionist Jews. Furthermore, the election in 1943 of a Zionist majority to the Board of Deputies of British Jews allowed the Zionist Organization to effectively transform the Board into a Zionist instrument. In November 1944, the Board endorsed the Biltmore Program and its maximalist demands, thus marking the subjugation of the once powerful voice of Jewish opposition to Zionism and the triumph of the Zionist master plan of uniting major Jewish organizations behind the Biltmore Program.⁹

Britain Gives In to Zionist Pressure

In Palestine, Arab leadership had been dismembered as a result of British repression of the Arab rebellion. Furthermore, Arab Palestinian leaders who had sought help from Berlin in the expectation of German victory now found themselves in an even more difficult position vis-à-vis Great Britain. London turned its attention away from Palestinian Arab leaders and the question of Arab nationalism, and more towards Arab state leaders, on whom it impressed the importance of some form of Arab economic and political coalition, in alliance with Great Britain, as the best guarantee against Soviet penetration of the Middle East – already considered as the major post-war problem. Britain was also interested in ensuring its own access to Arab oil, of vital importance to the peacetime economy, and Arab military bases, which had crucial strategic importance for the survival of the weakened British Empire.

Gradually, and under continued Zionist pressure, the British government was losing enthusiasm for its own 1939 White Paper and statement of policy. The final blow came in the summer of 1942, when Oliver Stanley, who sympathized with the Zionists and shared Churchill's views on Palestine, replaced Lord Moyne as Colonial Secretary. Stanley began working on various schemes to discredit the White Paper and bring back partition and was helped along the way by a powerful endorsement from the reconstituted American Palestine Committee, which now included 68 senators and 200 representatives. On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration in 1942, the American

Palestine Committee issued a statement strongly denouncing the White Paper. By November 1943, Churchill was able to inform Weizmann that the Cabinet Committee on Palestine had endorsed partition. In the same month, the new Colonial Secretary announced that the five-year limit for Jewish immigration would be extended.

In September 1944, under intense Zionist pressure and against the advice of the Palestine administration, a Jewish Brigade Group was set up to take part in active operations. It was an important “victory of principle” for the Zionists, who thus managed to associate Jewishness with a distinct nationality. The formation of the brigade also served a more practical purpose; it became, as the British administration had expected, the nucleus of the future army of Israel, which would play a decisive role in forcibly wresting Palestine from its Arab inhabitants.¹⁰

As Britain was moving away from the White Paper, the Arab states were moving closer to supporting it. In October 1944, representatives of six Arab countries (Egypt, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon and Transjordan) met in Alexandria under the chairmanship of Egyptian Prime Minister Nahas Pasha, who enjoyed the confidence of the British. The conference drew up the Covenant of the Arab League and adopted an important Resolution dealing with Palestine which stated: “That Palestine constitutes an important part of the Arab world and that the rights of the Arabs in Palestine cannot be touched without prejudice to peace and stability in the Arab world . . . That the promises binding the British Government and providing for the stoppage of Jewish immigration, the preservation of Arab lands and the achievement of independence for Palestine are permanent Arab rights whose prompt execution would constitute a step towards the stabilization of peace and security . . . there can be no greater injustice and aggression than solving the problem of the Jews in Europe by another injustice, that is, by inflicting injustice on the Palestine Arabs of various religions and denominations.”¹¹

The Arab states were, in fact, clearly declaring their acceptance of the 1939 White Paper, which they had earlier received with mixed feelings. The situation had now changed and they understood that their best chance lay in accepting the White Paper. At the same time the Zionists, who had strongly opposed the White Paper, already understood that there was no going back to the 1939 document. The entry of the United States into the war, the influential role played by the American

Zionists, the news about Nazi massacres of Jews in Europe and American financial leverage over Britain, with whom the United States was vying for power and influence in the oil-rich Middle East, had all affected the balance of power between the various parties. The Palestinian Arabs were virtually leaderless and powerless while the Jewish Agency in Palestine had developed, by the end of the war, into “a state within the State. It controlled the Jewish economic sector of the country, it had its own hospitals and social services, it ran its own schools, its own intelligence service with virtually all Jewish Government officials as voluntary informers, and controlled its own paramilitary organization, the famous Haganah, nucleus of the future Army of Israel.” All this amounted to a Jewish shadow government and a Jewish shadow army representing “the embryo of the future Jewish State growing in the Mandatory Administration’s womb”.¹²

Britain, pressured from within by growing Zionist power, vulnerable to American pressure from without, and challenged in Palestine politically and militarily by the growing aggressiveness of Zionist demands and methods, could no longer act as a free agent in Palestine. On the basis of recommendations from the Colonial Office, the Cabinet put aside the White Paper and began studying plans for the partition of Palestine.¹³

Irgun and the Stern Gang Terror Campaign

Violence was bound to continue in Palestine, but this time Britain was in no position to send reinforcements to keep up its rule over Palestine. It had emerged from World War II greatly weakened and practically ruined. Its imperial days would soon come to an end, and the colonized people from India to Egypt and Palestine knew it. So did the Zionists. They had already moved onto the political offensive with their maximalist demands at the Biltmore conference. They had correctly predicted that the centre of power would shift from Britain to the United States, where they were now concentrating their efforts to maximize American pressure on Britain, and where they now enjoyed President Truman’s support. Their military power in Palestine had steadily grown thanks to British policy and collusion. The time was right to move onto the military offensive to force Britain to abandon its White Paper policy and give up its control of Palestine for the benefit of the Jewish minority.

The strategy adopted to achieve this was the one recommended by Jabotinsky: terror. Though it fell to his successor, a certain Polish immigrant named Menachem Begin who became the leader of the Irgun (and would later become Prime Minister of Israel), to carry it out. Itzhak Shamir, another Polish immigrant and also future Prime Minister of Israel, headed the splinter group the Stern Gang.

The anti-British campaign of terror by the Stern Gang reached its climax in November 1944 when members of the gang assassinated Lord Moyne, the British Minister of State in Cairo. The Menachem Begin-led Irgun's campaign delivered a more spectacular act of terror with the blowing-up of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem on July 22, 1946, killing about one hundred British, Arabs and Jews. The operation was carried out with the approval of the main Zionist leadership, which, as had become customary for it, denounced the attack.¹⁴

Pro-Zionist British parliamentarian Richard Crossman, in Palestine as part of the Anglo-American committee, noted that under questioning Ben-Gurion refused to commit the Haganah, the main Zionist military organization, to suppressing the terrorist acts of the Irgun and of the Stern Gang. He recorded: "Today Ben-Gurion gave evidence and made a bad impression on the committee . . . He seems to want to have it both ways, to remain within the letter of the law as chairman of the Agency, and to tolerate terror as a method of bringing pressure on the Administration."¹⁵

Unlike its repressive response to the Arab rebellion ten years earlier, the British government was unable to crush the Zionist terror campaign, lacking the will and being sensitive to Zionist pressure at home. "Thus, it came about that", noted British writer David Hirst, "while in the late thirties, 20,000 soldiers broke the military power of a million Arabs, in the late forties 600,000 Jews, admittedly an altogether more formidable force than the Arabs, enforced the humiliating withdrawal of 100,000 soldiers. It was more than just fatigue, a loss of imperial will, more than just overwhelming American pressure that generated such a partisan spirit. This was rooted in the pro-Zionist traditions of the ruling establishment . . ."¹⁶

In fact, there is evidence to suggest complicity between British government officials and Zionist leaders at least in the acquiescence to Zionist terror tactics to hasten the departure of British troops from Palestine. Thomas Hugh, biographer of John Strachey, Under-Secretary

of State for Air in the Attlee Labour government, reports how the pro-Zionist MP Richard Cross approached Strachey to ask him his opinion on an impending Zionist terrorist operation against the British army in Palestine. Strachey wanted to check with other members of the government. He came back the next day and gave his approval for the terrorist operation.¹⁷

Former Labour MP Christopher Mayhew commented with outrage: "At a time when the hard-pressed British army in Palestine is struggling to uphold the policy of the British [Labour] Government against attacks mounted by Zionist terrorists, a [Labour] Member of Parliament who supports the Zionists feels free to approach a Minister and ask him whether to encourage a specific terrorist action against the British army in Palestine. Most astonishing of all is the fact that the Minister, who is actually a member of the government's Defence Committee, gives his 'approval' for the action . . . Such behaviour by supposedly responsible members of the Labour Party and Government would be inconceivable in any context other than that of Zionism."¹⁸ After receiving approval from British authorities in London, the Haganah went ahead and blew up all the bridges over the Jordan. Mercifully no one was killed.

Propaganda in America

In 1941 the Zionists had formed the American Palestine Committee for the purpose of gaining the sympathy and support of American Christians and "to educate and arouse American public opinion on behalf of the establishment of Palestine as a Jewish Commonwealth".¹⁹ An extensive campaign was launched to recruit American journalists, labour and professional circles to the cause of Zionism, and particularly to support Jewish statehood in Palestine, which many Americans supported though they had little understanding of the implications. By the end of the war, the American Palestine Committee had a membership of 6,500 public figures. The propaganda effort succeeded in getting 33 state legislators and the American Federation of Labour to pass resolutions favouring Zionism. Zionist propaganda also succeeded in greatly increasing the number of American Zionists and at the same time in overwhelming Jewish opposition to Zionism.

By the end of 1943, the Zionists had succeeded in getting the American Jewish Conference, representing all factions of American Jewry,

to endorse the Biltmore Program. The Zionists managed to overwhelm or isolate non-Zionist American Jews and organizations until it became “next to impossible for a Jew to oppose Zionism and retain the respect of his fellow Jews”.²⁰

In January 1944, Zionist pressure and propaganda led to the introduction in both houses of Congress of resolutions endorsing the Biltmore Program. Because of opposition from the State Department and the Pentagon, and particularly Chief-of-Staff General George Marshall who felt that such resolutions could be detrimental to the Allied war effort, the resolutions were shelved. But Zionist influence had already been established, and it is instructive to note that when the resolution was presented to the House of Representatives, it was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs chaired by Sol Bloom, a representative from New York and a Zionist, who essentially steered the members of the Committee towards the ‘facts’ as presented in Zionist propaganda pamphlets. American politicians got the message and, equating Zionism with the Jewish vote, both party conventions adopted pro-Zionist planks in that year, which Bloom would later use to remind his fellow Congressmen of their pro-Zionist election commitments.²¹

The State Department was subjected to particularly scurrilous attacks ranging from being pro-Arab to being moved by anti-Semitic forces. But it is interesting to note that the Zionists and their supporters would criticize the Department’s position during these crucial years as failing to show proper understanding for the new realities in Palestine, which the Department should have accepted “in the name of *realpolitik*”.²²

The propaganda campaign was so effective that the Zionists were able to successfully pressure the American Congress to deny entry to European Jewish refugees to dramatize the need for Jewish refugees to go to Palestine. Of the 300,000 homeless European Jews most would have probably chosen to go to Western Europe and the United States if they had been given the choice. But the Zionists made sure that these refugees did not have that choice. While tiny Palestine was being asked to admit 100,000, the American Congress, under strong Zionist pressure, agreed with great reluctance to admit a mere 20,000 refugees after spending three years on a bill which, in Truman’s words, “discriminates in callous fashion against displaced persons of the Jewish faith”.²³ This served to further dramatize the homelessness of Jewish refugees and to impress upon American and world public opinion the need to admit them to Palestine.

Zionist Propaganda Tactics

Throughout the war, Zionist activism also took another form: the organization of large-scale illegal immigration to Palestine. In collaboration with the Haganah high command, the Zionists established in 1937, a Committee on Illegal Immigration (Mossad) whose emissaries were dispatched to Germany and Austria for the task of recruiting able-bodied prospective immigrants and organizing illegal immigration to Palestine. As Jon and David Kimche candidly revealed in their book *The Secret Roads*, the emissaries of the Mossad were less interested in the humanitarian aspect of European Jewish immigration to Palestine than in the political use of able-bodied men and women with pioneering spirit willing to go to Palestine to challenge British rule and help seize the country from the Palestinian Arab majority.

The Mossad was able to illegally bring 80,000 European Jews to Palestine while at the same time forcing the British administration in Palestine to decree in 1940 that illegal immigrants would be turned away and shipped to a British colony for the duration of the war. Such was the fate of the two ships *Milos* and *Pacific*, whose illegal immigrants were intercepted by the British coastguards and transferred to another ship, the *Patria*, for deportation to Mauritius. On November 22, 1940, the ship blew up and Zionist propaganda put it out that the refugees had committed suicide to draw attention to their plight. The Kimches revealed, however, that the whole tragedy had been the work of the Zionists themselves: “it was an open secret that it had been organized by the Haganah”.²⁴

But the Zionist propaganda was effective and the world believed the twisted story put out “by the organizers of the tragedy and their sympathizers . . . for the blackening of the character of the Palestine administration and the motives of its directors”, wrote Albert Hyamson, former Director of Immigration in Palestine and a supporter of the Jewish National Home.²⁵

Another masterstroke in the Zionist propaganda campaign was the ‘boat-propaganda technique’ by which the Zionists rounded up Jewish refugees and shipped them, often in unseaworthy boats, to force a confrontation with the British in Palestine. This boat-propaganda technique “was largely done by fraud . . . Haganah activists, by stirring the passengers to a wild mood of resistance, and threatening those who hesitated, were able to represent them as unanimous in their demand to be landed in Palestine and nowhere else.”²⁶

The most famous of these propaganda ventures was the depressing odyssey of the ship *Exodus* dramatized in a book and glorified by Hollywood in the film of the same name. The Zionists sent the vessel with 4,500 Jewish refugees to Palestine knowing full well that the British would turn it back, while making sure they had the world's media ready so that American and international public opinion knew about it.

Zionist propaganda efforts in the United States were extremely successful. They managed to portray the conflict in Palestine as one between Jews fighting for their freedom and the imperialist British intent upon denying it to them. Palestinian Arabs, still the majority of the people in Palestine, were simply obliterated from the conflict as if they did not exist.

"It was a constant source of irritation to the British Government," observed the Zionist Attorney-General in the Palestine Government, "that American–Jewish funds openly supported the 'illegal' immigration and the Jewish terrorist bands. The principal American newspapers carried large pro-terrorist advertisements."²⁷ American Zionists led by Rabbis Abba Silver and Stephen Wise led a fierce opposition to the idea of a bi-national state in Palestine. Congressmen protested against British brutalities in Palestine, and Hollywood and political personalities including Eleanor Roosevelt used their talents to raise funds for the Zionists. The money went to buy arms for the Irgun. And yet, it was passed off as tax-free contributions to charity.²⁸

NOTES

- 1 Alfred M. Lilienthal, *The Zionist Connection: What Price Peace?* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1978), p. 34.
- 2 David Ben-Gurion, "We Look Toward America, 1939", in Walid Khalidi (ed.), *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem until 1948* (Beirut: The Institute For Palestine Studies, 1971), pp. 481–88, p. 483.
- 3 Alan R. Taylor, *Prelude to Israel: An Analysis of Zionist Diplomacy, 1897–1947* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), p. 59.
- 4 J. C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Middle East: A Documentary Record: 1914–1956* (Princeton, New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand, 1956), vol. II, p. 235.
- 5 Zeev Tzur, *From Partition Dispute to the Allon Plan* (Tel Aviv: Tabenkin Institute, 1982), pp. 46–47, quoted in Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), pp. 21–22.

- 6 Simha Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), p. 283.
- 7 Hannah Arendt, "Zionism Reconsidered", *Menorah Journal*, vol. 33, no. 2. (Autumn, 1945), 167, quoted in Erskin Childers, op. cit., p. 177.
- 8 Khalidi, *From Haven to Conquest*, op. cit., p. iii
- 9 Jacob C. Hurewitz, *The Struggle for Palestine* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1950), p. 208.
- 10 Arthur Koestler, *Promise and Fulfilment, Palestine 1917–1949* (London: Macmillan, 1949), p. 83.
- 11 Quoted in Hurewitz, *The Struggle For Palestine*, op. cit., p. 192.
- 12 Koestler, *Promise and Fulfilment*, op. cit., pp. 12–13.
- 13 John Marlowe, *The Seat of Pilate: An Account of the Palestine Mandate* (London: The Cresset Press, 1959), p. 179.
- 14 See Gil Ronen, 'King David St. Attack Exactly 62 Years After King David Bombing', *Israel National News*, 22 July 2008 (<http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/126929>); Thurston Clarke, *By Blood and Fire: The Attack on the King David Hotel* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1981); Richard Crossman, *Palestine Mission: A Personal Record* (New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1947), p. 129.
- 15 Richard Crossman, *Palestine Mission: A Personal Record* (New York & London: Harper and Brothers), p. 129.
- 16 David Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch: The Roots of Violence in the Middle East* (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), pp. 121–22.
- 17 Hugh Thomas, *John Strachey* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1973), pp. 228–29.
- 18 Michael Adams and Christopher Mayhew, *Publish it Not: The Middle East Cover-Up* (London: Longman, 1975), p. 33.
- 19 Hurewitz, *The Struggle for Palestine*, op. cit., p. 210.
- 20 Taylor, *Prelude to Israel*, op. cit., p. 80.
- 21 Frank Charles Sakran, *Palestine Dilemma: Arab Rights versus Zionist Aspirations* (Washington, D. C.: Public Affairs Press, 1948), pp. 169–73.
- 22 See the pro-Zionist criticism of the State Department by Phillip J. Baram, *The Department of State in the Middle East, 1919–1945* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), p. 328.
- 23 Robert A. Divine, *American Immigration Policy: 1924–1952* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 128.
- 24 Jon and David Kimche, *The Secret Roads: The 'Illegal' Migration of a People, 1938–1949* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, 1955), p. 54.
- 25 Albert Haymson, *Palestine Under Mandate: 1920–1948* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1976), p. 150.
- 26 Christopher Sykes, *Crossroads to Israel* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1965), p. 321.
- 27 Norman and Helen Bentwich, *Mandate Memories: 1918–1948* (New York: Shocken Books, 1965), p. 169.
- 28 Issac Zaar, *Rescue and Liberation: America's part in the Birth of Israel* (New York: Bloch, 1954), pp. 215–16.

The Decline of the British Empire and the Rise of American Hegemony

The End of the Age of British Empire

World War II, as British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan would later recall, put an end to the age of British Empire.¹ It also financially ruined Great Britain. Before the war, Great Britain possessed overseas assets of £1.1 billion. By 1945, it had liquidated all these assets and accumulated an external sterling indebtedness of £3.4 billion. Britain desperately needed help beyond the American Lend-Lease assistance programmes. So when American President Harry Truman abruptly terminated Lend-Lease aid to Britain in August 1945, Britain's situation was desperate.

London immediately applied for an American loan. The United States' vision for the world economy envisaged bringing Britain, and its sphere of political and economic influence including raw materials and particularly oil, into an American orbit. The American \$3.75 billion loan to Britain came with conditions that forced Britain to dismantle her sterling trading block in order to facilitate American penetration of nations under British sterling restrictions.²

With regard to access to oil, the United States was determined to increase its access and control of oil in the Middle East. The oil output of the latter and its relative importance in world output had increased dramatically. At the end of World War I, the Western hemisphere, controlled by the United States under the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, was the centre of world oil output and European powers were excluded from it. By the end of World War II, the Middle East had one half of the world's known oil reserves. In 1938, Britain and its European partners had controlled 80% of Middle East oil, and Washington was determined to change that. As a result, American–British relations with regard to the Middle East were essentially characterized by a reallocation of power and influence in the area, a task helped by both Iran and Iraq, which

welcomed American influence as a balance to British domination over the region.

With Washington's support and encouragement, American oil companies proceeded to denounce previous agreements with the British and to increase their oil output from the region. The British could not halt their own demise and watched helplessly as their share of Middle East oil gradually reduced. Whereas the British and Dutch oil companies controlled 60% of the Middle East oil output in 1946, that share was 31% by 1953. The Americans, who had controlled only 16% in 1939, increased their oil output to 31% in 1946 and to 60% by 1953.³

British dependence on, and relegation to a subordinate role to, the United States in world trade and in the Middle East meant that the centre of gravity for the crucial decisions affecting Palestine shifted from London to Washington. With British abdication of their imperial responsibilities in Palestine, the fate of Palestine was further removed from the country that had contracted undertakings and commitments to the Arabs, to an international organization still dominated by the United States and its bloc of friendly nations – the United Nations.

The United States in the Middle East

Throughout the 19th century, American interest in the Middle East was primarily cultural and religious. From 1823, American missionaries had begun establishing religious missions, schools, colleges, and hospitals in Egypt and Syria. These American missions were generally well received by the local population because, unlike French missionary schools, they did not attempt to systematically represent the colonial interests of the mother country. The American missions focused on religious, cultural and educational issues and were largely uninterested in the politics of the region.

Adding to American prestige in the region was President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Point Plan during World War I and its emphasis on the principle of self-determination as the basis of the post-war settlement. American suspicions of French and British colonial designs in the Middle East had led President Wilson to send the King–Crane Commission to the region, though its pro-Arab Palestinian findings were not acted upon following President Wilson's defeat in the 1920 elections and America's failure to join the League of Nations.

As part of their division of spheres of influence in the Middle East, France and Britain had agreed, at the San Remo Conference in 1920, to divide the natural resources of the area between themselves. They had accordingly used their national petroleum companies to form the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC). At the urging of American oil interests, anxious to have access to the promising Middle East oil fields, the State Department argued in favour of a more active American role in the area and for pressure on France and Britain to share their monopoly over the Middle East oil.

Grudgingly, Britain and France agreed to let five American oil companies own 23.7% of IPC, with the stipulation that they should stay away from Saudi Arabia. But the enterprising American companies persisted in undermining the British monopoly in the area. Shortly afterwards, in 1929, the Standard Oil Company of California (SoCal) purchased a concession in Bahrain for \$50,000, further annoying the British colonial masters of the tiny Gulf Sheikdom. Having discovered oil in commercial quantities, SoCal signed with King Saud, in 1939, a commercial contract for exploration and exploitation of oil resources in Saudi Arabia. Texaco joined SoCal in the exploitation of what was promising to be a vast reservoir of oil.

During World War II, Washington granted government subsidies to SoCal and Texaco to construct a 1000-mile pipeline to the Mediterranean to supply the Allies with their growing oil needs. Saudi Arabia as an oil producer was acquiring, in addition to its economic value, a strategic importance. In 1943, President Roosevelt declared the security of Saudi Arabia to be vital to the defence of the United States.

After the war, Washington played a more aggressive role in supporting American companies' persistent demands for an 'open door' policy, in an effort to break the now weakened British imperial control over the Middle East. Consequently, American participation in the exploitation of Saudi Arabia's oil reserves grew when SoCal and Texaco were joined by Exxon and Mobil to form the Arabian American Oil Company (Aramco).

Zionists Oppose Jewish Refugee Resettlement in the United States

During the first three terms of President Franklin Roosevelt, the United States government took the position that the question of Jewish National Home was not an American interest and that Palestine was a British

responsibility.⁴ With the outbreak of World War II, the British efforts to find a solution to the Palestine problem were put aside. During that time the Zionists concentrated their pressure on the American administration of President Franklin Roosevelt urging him to do everything to support their programme in Palestine.

Roosevelt sent greetings to the annual conventions of the Zionist Organization of America, which were always worded carefully so as to avoid any commitments.⁵ In 1943, Roosevelt had sent to the Middle East a personal representative, Brigadier General Patrick J. Hurley, to report to him about the situation. Hurley reported to Roosevelt that:

For its part, the Zionist Organization in Palestine has indicated its commitment to an enlarged program for:

- a. A sovereign Jewish state, which would embrace Palestine and probably Transjordan;
- b. An eventual transfer of the Arab population from Palestine to Iraq;
- c. Jewish leadership for the whole Middle East in the fields of economic development and control.”⁶

When the dangers facing European Jews became clear, President Roosevelt, who viewed the question of Jewish immigration not as a Palestinian problem but rather as an international responsibility, set out to organize an international relief effort to help resettle European Jewish refugees. He was acutely aware of the hypocrisy inherent in what Morris Ernst, a New York lawyer who was also a close friend, called “the closed door–open lip hypocrisies” of Western nations including the United States, which demanded immigration concessions from the Arabs of Palestine but kept their own immigration flows tightly controlled.

Roosevelt was prepared to lead an international effort whereby 500,000 European Jews would be resettled in Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia and the Latin-American countries. He entrusted Ernst with the task of convincing the British to go along with the proposal, and Ernst was able to get a pledge from the British government to accept 150,000 European Jews, a number to be matched by the United States.

Ernst’s efforts in the United States were opposed by the American Zionists, who were more interested in Zionism’s ultimate goal of a Jewish state than in the plight of Jewish refugees. They feared that if allowed to

succeed, the Roosevelt plan would reduce the impact of one of the mainstays of their propaganda machine, namely, the burning issue of the homelessness of European Jews. This had served to raise funds for the Zionists and to pressure Britain into opening Palestine for more Jewish immigrants.

“I was amazed and even felt insulted”, wrote Ernst, “when active Jewish leaders decried, sneered and then attacked me as if I were a traitor. At one dinner party I was openly accused of furthering this plan for freer immigration in order to undermine political Zionism. Those Jewish groups, which favoured opening our doors gave little more than lip service to the Roosevelt program. Zionists friends of mine opposed it. I think I know the reason for much of the opposition. There is a deep, genuine, and often fanatical emotional vested interest in putting over the Palestinian movement. Men like [Hollywood script-writer] Ben Hecht are little concerned about human blood if it is not their own . . . To raise millions is not too hard as long as solicitors can say, ‘These bedevilled Jews of Europe have nowhere to go but Palestine.’ But imagine the difficulty in raising funds if the person approached is in a position to reply: ‘What do you mean, ‘nowhere else to go?’”⁷

Democrats and Republicans Compete for Zionist Support

Zionist propaganda in America had successfully led to the introduction of two identically worded resolutions into the House and Senate in early 1944. The resolution read: “Resolved that the United States shall use its good offices and take appropriate measures to the end that the doors of Palestine shall be opened for free entry of Jews in that country, and that there shall be full opportunity for colonization so that the Jewish people may ultimately reconstitute Palestine as a free and democratic Jewish commonwealth.”⁸

But the debate on the resolution was cut short by a note from Secretary of War Stimson, on March 17, 1944, warning that further action on these resolutions would be prejudicial to the successful prosecution of the war. Indeed, the Allies were preparing the Normandy invasion and did not want any disturbances in the Middle East, which might necessitate a deployment of troops away from where they were needed most.

However, by the middle of 1944, both Democrats and Republicans were fully supportive of Zionism. During the political conventions of

1944, both parties included Zionist planks in their platforms. The Republicans attacked the President for not doing more to support the provisions of the Balfour Declaration and the Zionist-inspired Mandate over Palestine. The Democrats responded by wholly endorsing the concept of transforming all of Palestine into a Jewish Commonwealth and inserting the extremist relevant passage of the Biltmore Program into their plank.

Roosevelt decided to go even further and sent a significant message to the October 1944 Convention of the American Zionists essentially committing the prestige of his Office to the implementation of the radical maximalist demands of the Biltmore programme: "Efforts will be made to find appropriate ways and means of effectuating this policy as soon as practicable. I know how long and ardently the Jewish people have worked and prayed for the establishment of Palestine as a free and democratic Jewish commonwealth. I am convinced that the American people will give their support to this aid; and if re-elected, I will help bring about its realization."⁹

On February 14, 1945, Roosevelt, on his way back from the Yalta Conference, met with Saudi Arabian King Ibn Saud aboard the USS *Quincy* in the Suez Canal. Roosevelt solicited Ibn Saud's agreement to accept more Jewish immigrants to Palestine, Ibn Saud told him to make Germany, the enemy and the oppressor of the Jews, pay not the Arabs, the innocent bystanders. Roosevelt gave Ibn Saud a double assurance, which he repeated in a letter to Ibn Saud, dated April 5, 1945, one week before Roosevelt's death: "(1) He personally, as president, would never do anything which might prove hostile to the Arabs; and (2) the U. S. Government would make no change in its basic policy in Palestine without full and prior consultation with both Jews and Arabs."¹⁰

At the same time, and notwithstanding his election-year October 1944 message of support for the Biltmore Program, Roosevelt seems to have favoured the idea of a trusteeship over Palestine presided over by a Jew, a Christian and a Muslim.

Palestine and the Emerging Cold War

With Roosevelt's death in April 1945, the Zionist position in the United States improved. President Harry Truman proved to be far more amenable to the Zionist cause than Roosevelt had been. Despite urgings from

Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinius that the Palestine question be considered with a view to America's long-term interests in the region, Truman proved more sensitive to Zionist arguments and threw his valuable support behind the Zionists. He urged the British to lift restrictions on Jewish immigration to Palestine and allow 100,000 European Jews into Palestine.

The Arabs protested angrily. King Saud of Saudi Arabia was upset by Truman's action, which seemed to violate Franklin Roosevelt's assurances to him – reiterated later by Truman himself – that no action with regard to Palestine would be taken without full consultation with, and agreement of, the Arabs. For their part, the Zionists attacked the plan, which they feared would set back their demand for support for the immediate establishment of a Jewish state.

The Zionists responded by opposing Congressional attempts to admit 400,000 displaced European refugees, including Jews, into the United States and by intensifying their organized illegal immigration to Palestine through the 'underground railway to Palestine' from European ports, where Jews were shipped from Eastern Europe in overcrowded and often unseaworthy ships to Palestine even though if given a free choice many would have chosen Europe or America as a destination. Zionist efforts to contrive a Jewish exodus from Europe to Palestine were presented to the world as a spontaneous phenomenon of homeless refugees having nowhere to go and freely wishing to go to Palestine.¹¹

As we have already seen, the move proved a successful public relations ploy and most Americans began to perceive the conflict as one between homeless European Jews and oppressive British imperialists refusing to allow them into Palestine. Zionist acts of terrorism against the British such as the blowing up of King David Hotel on July 22, 1946, were portrayed as acts of heroism and resistance to the same British oppressors the American revolutionaries had valiantly fought and successfully overthrown. As it was crystallizing in the United States, the conflict in Palestine was being perceived as struggle between Zionists and British. The Arabs were already being psychologically obliterated from the dynamics of the conflict.

Washington still resisted direct political involvement in the area's affairs, and preferred to deal either through the United Nations, as in the Iranian dispute in 1946, or with Britain, as in the case of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine.

The British argued that the Palestine question must now be seen within the context of Soviet threat to the Middle East. The extension of the *cordon sanitaire*, and policy of containment in the Middle East could only be accomplished with the support of pro-Western Arab governments. If Palestine were declared a Jewish state it would offer an opportunity for Soviet penetration of the region and it would be difficult to get Arab support for the anti-Soviet Western plans. There was support at the highest political and military levels in the United States for this strategic assessment. As Kermit Roosevelt, head of the CIA Middle East Division, observed, the Russians “have tried in Greece, in Turkey, and in Iran to advance towards it [the Middle East]. Only the most determined opposition by Britain and the United States has held them in check. It seems logical to conclude that the Soviet support of the partition of Palestine represents Russia’s most recent move toward that long established end.”¹²

Reasoning that Russia’s objective was to gain physical control of the Dardanelles and Turkey, and thus be in a position to deny the West access to oil in the Middle East and eliminate Western influence in the region, Truman supported Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal’s enthusiasm for the extension of American power to the Mediterranean. The navy ordered its fleet of destroyers to make a number of demonstrations of American naval power in Greece and Algeria, where nationalist uprisings were described by British, French and American officials as being instigated and supported by Russia. The exhibition of American power in the Mediterranean gave rise to the temptation to keep it there permanently, so that it could be ‘unleashed’ if necessary. Given the American–British rivalry, the American–Russian competition, and American oil interests in the Middle East, there was no shortage of crises that ‘needed’ American intervention.

The Americans, British and Russians had invaded Iran in 1941 because of the Iranian government’s pro-German position, and had agreed to withdraw their troops within six months of the termination of the war. By 1943, the British and Americans had sought to improve their oil privileges in Iran. By the autumn of 1944, the Russians had joined them and wanted some concessions in the north of Iran, causing the Iranian parliament to freeze all concessions until the end of the war. In December 1945, the Russians supported the creation of a separatist government in Azerbaijan in northern Iran, while the British supported the Arab tribes of Khuzistan in the oil-rich west.

When the deadline for withdrawal came, on March 2, 1946, Russian troops were still in northern Iran. Washington responded by using the United Nations Security Council to excoriate the Russians in humiliating public trials even after the Iranian government requested that the issue be dropped from the agenda. In the end the Russians left and the United States, as Joyce and Gabriel Kolko put it: "won oil for American firms; and the UN became an unabashed instrument of American diplomacy which gave no quarter to Soviet interests . . . [America's] new role was designed, when it was first articulated, to take the Middle East out of the British sphere of influence . . . and to win oil for the United States".¹³

In the Iranian crisis, American determination to prevent the 'loss' of Iran to the Soviet Union was defined in terms of maintaining American power in Saudi Arabia which had been described by the State Department as ". . . a stupendous source of strategic power, and one of the greatest material prizes in world history".¹⁴ With this first post-war crisis, American commitment to intervene in the Middle East had become a foregone conclusion.¹⁵

By the end of 1946, it was evident that Britain was both unable to put an end to the Greek nationalist uprising, which the right-wing Greek government was presenting as communist aggression, and unwilling to continue financing its imperial role in that country. It directly appealed to Washington to take over Britain's imperial responsibilities in the East Mediterranean.

In line with its emerging doctrine of American power in the Mediterranean, maintenance of Western influence and prevention of Soviet penetration into the Middle East, Washington stepped in to relieve Britain. The Truman administration agreed to commit the country to defend not only Greece and Turkey but also all of the Middle East. Dean Acheson, US Secretary of State from 1949 to 1953, provided the following rationale to the Congress: "should the Soviets dominate Greece and Turkey, the other states of the region would surely fall. The United States would lose access to the strategic communication-transportation routes and to the petroleum so vital to the recovery of Europe."¹⁶

In March 1947, the Truman Doctrine enunciated an American foreign policy based on a Manichean vision of the world in which the "free peoples" were threatened by "totalitarian regimes". "I believe it

must be the policy of the United States,” President Harry Truman told the American Congress in the central passage of his Doctrine, “to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures”.

Truman committed the United States to the defence of the “free peoples”, without geographical limitations, against subversion from within or pressure from without, without limitations either on the definition of the threat or where it came from. The policy of containment that would define the American approach to the Middle East, and around much of the world, had come into being. The Soviet Union had to be contained within the borders of its empire and prevented from spreading its influence and domination to the vital wealth of the Middle East.¹⁷

The Soviet Union had shown its interest in the region by denouncing the Arab monarchies, which had agreed to enter into alliance with imperialist powers interested in colonizing and exploiting the Arab people. At the same time, Moscow was quite prepared to modify its position if it were allowed to share in the wealth of the region, as was evidenced by its unsuccessful attempt to be granted a Mandate over Libya. At any rate, the Truman Doctrine was designed to take over where the British left off and to shut the Soviet Union out of the Middle East. From that point, until the collapse of communism some 40 years later, it is safe to say that there was not a major American foreign policy debate or decision which was not determined, or at least influenced, by the perceived need to contain Soviet influence from spreading to areas, the control of which, was judged important or vital to the national interests of the United States.

NOTES

- 1 Harold Macmillan, *Tides of Fortune, 1945–55* (London: Macmillan, 1969), p. xv.
- 2 Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, *The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1945–54* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), pp. 59–90.
- 3 Kolko, *The Limits of Power*, op. cit., p. 72.
- 4 Frank E. Manuel, *The Realities of American–Palestine Relations* (Washington D. C.: Public Affairs Press, 1949), pp. 305–08.
- 5 Jacob C. Hurewitz, *The Struggle for Palestine* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1950), p. 213.
- 6 *Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers 1943, Vol. IV, The Near East and Africa* (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1964), pp. 776–77.
- 7 Morris L. Ernst, *So Far So Good* (New York: Harper, 1948), pp. 170–77.
- 8 Manuel, *The Realities of American–Palestine Relations*, op. cit., p. 311.
- 9 Ibid., p. 312.
- 10 William A. Eddy, *F. D. R. Meets Ibn Saud* (New York: American Friends of the Middle East, 1954), pp. 33–37. See also the *New York Times*, October 19, 1945.
- 11 See Jon Kimche, *The Secret Roads: The 'Illegal' Migration of a People, 1938–1948* (New York: Hyperion Press, 1976).
- 12 Manuel, *The Realities of American–Palestine Relations*, op. cit., p. 337.
- 13 Kolko, *The Limits of Power*, op. cit., pp. 241–42.
- 14 Ibid., p. 242.
- 15 Ibid., p. 242.
- 16 Thomas A. Bryson, *American Diplomatic Relations With the Middle East, 1784–1975: A Survey* (Metuchen, N. J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1977), p. 147.
- 17 See Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia and The Cold War* (New York: John Wiley and Son, 1980). See also Richard J. Barnet, *Intervention and Revolution: America's Confrontations with Insurgent Movements Around the World* (New York: New American Library, 1980).

The Turning Point: Truman Endorses Partition, 1947

A Jewish State in the Whole of Palestine

Encouraged by the militant resolutions of the Biltmore Program, the Zionists were clearly on the offensive, capitalizing on their correct assessment of the power relationships between the various parties in Palestine, and in the international arena. The change of government in Britain in 1945 gave them cause to be optimistic, since the Labour party had traditionally been strongly pro-Zionist.¹ They took their demands to Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary in the Labour Government. The Zionists demanded that Britain declare the whole of Palestine a Jewish state. Bevin, despite Labour's traditional strong support for Zionism, found that the political realities in Palestine could not allow the implementation of Zionist demands without deliberate violation of the rights of the Arab majority in Palestine. The Zionists demanded the immediate admission to Palestine of 100,000 Jews. Bevin refused to give in and depart from the government policy contained in the MacDonald White Paper. He decided to send another Commission to Palestine, inviting the United States, the new superpower of the West, to partake. At the same time, the American Zionists were successfully exerting pressure on the White House to endorse their demands. Two days after he came to power, Labour Prime Minister Clement Attlee received a letter from US President Harry Truman urging him to lift the restrictions on Jewish immigration imposed by the British White Paper.²

The Anglo-American Commission recommended that Palestine, after a period of UN trusteeship, become a bi-national state. The Zionists rejected the proposal, as they did the Commission's call to disband their illegal underground army and paramilitary organizations. The Arabs rejected the commission's recommendation for the immediate admission of 100,000 Jews.

Increased Zionist terrorism in Palestine had prompted the British to raid the offices of the Jewish Agency and arrest a number of Zionist leaders. The American Zionists were furious and made their anger known to the American government. The Truman administration dispatched diplomat Henry F. Grady to London. Grady agreed with British Deputy Prime Minister Herbert Morrison on a plan which the Colonial Office had favoured but which the Anglo-American committee had rejected. The Morrison–Grady Plan called for continued UN trusteeship, autonomous Arab and Jewish provinces and for Jerusalem and the Negev to be placed under British administration.

But the plan came under the Zionists’ ‘concentrated assault’ as “telegrams of protest once again flooded the White House”, and forced Truman who “had liked the Morrison–Grady plan”, to give in to Zionist pressure. On August 7, Truman “telegraphed his rejection to [British Prime Minister] Attlee”, thus repudiating the policy recommendations of his own envoy. The British were angered by Truman’s opportunistic policy – more sensitive to his advisors’ claim that a pro-Zionist position would help raise funds for the Democratic party machine, than to the State Department’s reminders of the late American President Franklin Roosevelt’s pledges to Ibn Saud, and of American interests in the Middle East.

The British government called another round table conference whose first session was held in London in September 1946. The first session failed to interest the Zionists or the Palestinian Arabs in the Morrison–Grady Plan for the cantonization of Palestine. But the plan had already been killed by Zionist pressure and American withdrawal of support. The conference proposed to examine alternate solutions at the next session.

However, at the 22nd Zionist Congress, which met in Basle in December of the same year, the Zionists were divided on whether or not to accept partition or to hold out for the full Biltmore Program. Ben-Gurion received support for his position of refusing to participate in the next session of the London conference. He argued that the Jewish Agency did not need to press for partition since the British could be relied upon to do that. The activists imposed their views and the Congress resolved “that in the existing circumstances the Zionist movement cannot participate in the London Conference”.³ The Jewish Agency should instead lobby for a Jewish state in the whole of Palestine.⁴

Weizmann was not re-elected because he exemplified cooperation with the British and this period was over. The Zionists now insisted on the complete Biltmore Program.⁵ The failure of the London Conference meant that the Truman administration would face the November 1946 congressional and gubernatorial elections with no movement on its demand for the admission into Palestine of 100,000 European Jews.

Truman Endorses Partition

To the dismay and the fury of the British, Truman decided to issue a statement, on October 4, 1946 disavowing the London Conference, and, most significantly, lending support to the Zionist programme of partition. The politically motivated statement sabotaged the London Conference which the British claimed was close to reaching a solution for Palestine on a cantonal basis.⁶ It also convinced the British that there was no hope of expecting American support for such a solution. British withdrawal from Palestine became inevitable. The statement also proved fateful in that it committed the United States government to supporting partition.⁷

The importance of the American President's politically motivated statement cannot be overestimated. It proved to be a watershed, a turning point that sanctioned the maximalist demands of the Zionists and gave them the go-ahead for the offensive strategy that would finally forcibly wrestle Palestine from its Arab owners.

"President Truman's October endorsement of the latest Zionist map for Palestine", observed Walid Khalidi, "was the most important event in Zionist history since the Balfour Declaration in 1917. It was directly responsible for starting the chain of events that led to the catastrophic climax of the British Mandate – the destruction of the Palestinian Arab community in the 1948 War and the rise of Israel . . . In terms of territory the Truman-sponsored Zionist map would give 75% of the total area of Palestine to the Jews at a time when their land ownership constituted 7% of this area – an increase of more than 1000% at Arab expense. The number of Jewish settlements to come under Arab rule was *ten* with a total of some 2,000 inhabitants or 1/3 of 1 percent of the total Jewish population of the country. The number of Arab towns and villages to come under Jewish rule would be about 450, with a total of about 700,000 inhabitants, or 58% of the total Arab population of the country."⁸

Truman's statement was designed to pre-empt an expected sweeping pro-Zionist announcement by a prospective rival Republican candidate in the 1948 presidential election. Truman was fully aware of, and had endorsed, the late American President Franklin Roosevelt's commitment to King Ibn Saud that "no decision should be taken regarding the basic situation in Palestine without full consultation with both Arabs and Jews".⁹ Furthermore, in his correspondence with Egyptian Prime Minister Noukrashy Pasha, Truman reaffirmed that commitment. Yet he chose the politically expedient method of unilateral support for the Zionists' demand for partition in his haste to beat his rival to the exploitation of the Palestine question for domestic political gains at the expense of the people of Palestine.

Britain was immobilized. It badly needed American financial help which Washington withheld until London complied with American wishes on Palestine.¹⁰ But Britain, unlike the United States, had a policy of sorts in the Middle East and could not afford to further antagonize the Arab people. At the same time, some of its best troops were being subjected to Zionist terrorism in Palestine. Unlike its response to the Arab rebellion of 1936–39, Britain's response to Zionist terrorism was halted by White House opposition to any violent repression of the Zionists in Palestine, and by the apparent complicity of some British officials with the Zionist leaders.

Under this protective arrangement, the Zionists proceeded to arrange for the military implementation of their designs on Palestine. In May 1947, a new general military plan was drawn up to take into account the possibility that the Arab states could intervene to help the hapless Palestinians preserve the integrity of their country, which faced imminent dismemberment. The new military plan, Plan Bet (Plan B), was designed to ensure the successful unilateral declaration of independence (a strategy which received Truman's support in his October 1946 statement) even if the Palestinian Arabs were aided by the Arab states.¹¹

Zionist pressure on Truman

It seems that Truman did not, in fact, tell the whole story of Zionist pressures on him while President, probably because of possible negative political repercussions. His daughter Margaret wrote about how irritated her father was by the relentless Zionist campaign to pressure him into

supporting the Partition Resolution at the United Nations. She recalled in particular how the Zionists urged Truman to 'browbeat' UN members into supporting partition: "It was one of the worst messes of my father's career . . . To tell the truth about what had happened would have made him and the entire American government look ridiculous. Not even in his memoirs did he feel free to tell the whole story, although he hinted at it."¹²

In a letter to Eleanor Roosevelt in August 1947, some three months before the Partition Resolution came before the UN General Assembly, Truman complained: "The action of some of our United States Zionists will prejudice everyone against what they are trying to get done. I fear very much that the Jews are like all underdogs. When they get on the top, they are just as intolerant and as cruel as the people were to them when they were underneath. I regret this situation very much because my sympathies have always been on their side."¹³

Margaret Truman also recalled that Zionist pressure also took the form of threats, which further infuriated Truman but seemed to have proven effective. In October 1948 the New York Democratic Party delegation paid a visit to Truman and warned him that unless he endorsed the widest possible boundaries for Israel, extended it *de jure* recognition and lifted the arms embargo, the President would certainly lose New York State in the coming presidential election.

Pressure also emanated from people, both Jewish and non-Jewish, inside the White House. Truman's assistant Clifford Clark was constantly reminding Truman of the political imperative of being sensitive to the Jewish vote. David K. Niles, Administrative Assistant to the President and ardent Zionist advisor on national minorities, Samuel I. Rosenman, a counsellor, and Eddie Jacobson, Truman's former partner in the haberdashery business, all played important roles in affecting Truman's views on the Palestine question and in pressuring him into more pro-Zionist positions.

The British Prepare to Leave

The British government made one last proposal at the London Conference when it resumed in February 1947. The proposal provided for continued British trusteeship for five years, Jewish immigration at the rate of 4,000 a month for two years, and the creation of an independent bi-national

Palestinian State after five years. When this proposal was rejected by both Palestinian Arabs and Jews, the Conference came to an end. The British government announced on February 14, 1947, that it was referring the whole problem to the United Nations.

This was a turning point in the Palestine question. Britain's withdrawal was now only a matter of time and the Zionists had been ready and indeed violently clamouring for it. They understood that the balance of power had been turned in their favour thanks to the British imperial shield in Palestine, and that Britain, seeing the violent Arab reactions to its policy in Palestine and realizing, belatedly, that its own interests in the Arab world might be seriously harmed as a result of the continuation of its pro-Zionist policy, had already served its purpose. Indeed, as former British Director of Immigration in Palestine Albert Hyamson observed, under British protection, 400,000 Jewish immigrants (official figures not including illegal immigrants) were settled in Palestine and "a Jewish population of 66,578 in 1920 had increased to about 640,000 in May 1948".¹⁴ Thus, British imperial rule over Palestine allowed the Zionists to increase the percentage of Jews in the population of Palestine from less than 10% in 1920 to about 32% in 1948.

The United States Pressures the United Nations to Recommend Partition

The failure of the London Conference in February 1947 had resulted in Britain turning the question of Palestine over to the United Nations. An 11-member United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) was struck by the General Assembly. It was composed of representatives of Canada, Sweden, Guatemala, Uruguay, Peru, Australia, the Netherlands, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Iran and India.

The Palestinians believed that the Committee was heavily weighed against them and made the strategic mistake of boycotting its proceedings. The UNSCOP visited Palestine and submitted two reports: a majority report recommended partitioning Palestine into an Arab state and a Jewish state, with Jerusalem enjoying a *corpus separatum* with an international regime; and a minority report (India, Iran and Yugoslavia) recommended a unitary bi-national state. The British government declared that the UNSCOP partition scheme was "so manifestly unfair to the Arabs" that they would take no part in implementing it if it were adopted.¹⁵

Indeed, when Britain recommended partition, the Arabs of Palestine could blame such a policy on the pro-Zionist political leadership in London, but when such a proposal for partitioning Palestine came from the United Nations, it was difficult to reconcile it with the principles on which the international organization was founded. As Walid Khalidi observed: "The name of the plan was the old one of partition. But whereas in 1937, partition had been recommended by the royal commission of an imperial power, it was now the ostensibly disinterested verdict of an impartial international body. This endowed the concept with the attributes of objectivity, and even-handedness – in short, of a compromise solution. But a compromise by definition is an arrangement acceptable, however grudgingly, to the protagonists. The 'partition' of Palestine proposed by UNSCOP was no such thing. It was Zionist in inspiration, Zionist in principle, Zionist in substance, and Zionist in details. The very idea of partition was abhorrent to the Arabs of Palestine, and it was against it that they had fought their bitter, desperate and costly fight in the years 1937–39. Also 'compromise' implies mutual concessions. What were the Zionists conceding? You can only really concede what you possess. What possessions in Palestine were the Zionists conceding? None at all."¹⁶

Like the Balfour Declaration, the UN plan for the partition of Palestine posed serious legal and moral problems. The Mandate over Palestine had been granted to Britain, as we saw above, as "a sacred trust of civilization" to be administered for the well-being of the inhabitants of the country. The Mandate contemplated that by the end of the mandate period, the temporary limitations on the sovereignty of Palestine would be removed and the people of Palestine would emerge as fully independent (Article 22).

The Mandate also provided that power over and control of the territory of Palestine would be transferred to "the Government of Palestine" (Article 28). Moreover, Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations itself obliged the international organization to act "in conformity with the principles of justice and international law" and to respect "the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples". Furthermore, under Article 73 of the Charter, concerning territories which had not yet acceded to independence, the United Nations was committed "to promote to the utmost the well-being of the inhabitants of these territories" and "to take due account of the political aspirations of the peoples".

The Arab delegates pointed out these and other problems raised by the partition recommendation. They argued that the United Nations could not be party to a process of alienation of territory and destruction of the integrity of the state of Palestine, which had been recognized as an independent state by the Mandate over Palestine. They requested that the whole issue be referred to the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion.

This was also the view of the UN subcommittee established to consider the UNSCOP plans. Its report, completed November 11, 1947, concluded: "An impartial and authoritative decision upon this matter is therefore a necessary and essential preliminary before the Ad Hoc Committee and the General Assembly proceed to make any recommendations on the merits of the Palestine problem. A refusal to submit this question for the opinion of the International Court of Justice would amount to a confession that the General Assembly is determined to make recommendations in a certain direction . . ." ¹⁷

The Arab delegates at the General Assembly prepared a draft resolution to seek an opinion from the International Court of Justice. The resolution asked: "Whether the UN or any of its member States is competent to enforce or recommend the enforcement of any proposal concerning the constitution and future government of Palestine, in particular, any plan of partition which is contrary to the wishes, or adopted without the consent of the inhabitants of Palestine." Meeting in an Ad Hoc Committee, the Assembly voted 21 against and 20 for the adoption of the resolution. ¹⁸ The question of Palestine was thus not referred to the International Court of Justice.

"I know of no pressure, except the pressure of the Jews . . ."

The Zionists started one of their most ferocious propaganda and lobbying campaigns to ensure American support for partition. Under enormous pressure, 47 members of the Illinois State Legislature and 23 governors and all the major leaders of organized American labour urged the Truman administration to support partition. When urged not to yield to pressure over the UNSCOP proposals, Truman responded testily: "I know of no pressure except the pressure of the Jews, which has always been extensive and continuous." ¹⁹

On October 10, the US Ambassador to the United Nations, Herschel Johnson, announced that the United States would support

partition, but that it wanted some modification to reduce the number of Arabs in the Jewish state. The modifications proposed provided that the Negev desert remain Arab and not be included in the Jewish state. However, following a visit from Weizmann who pleaded for the Negev, Truman instructed the American delegation in New York to forget about the Negev remaining in Arab hands.

Yet, when the Partition Resolution was presented to the Ad Hoc Committee on November 25 it received only 25 votes, falling significantly short of the two-thirds majority required to make the Resolution a recommendation of the General Assembly. The Zionists and the White House went into overdrive and spared no tactics to sway votes in favour of the Partition Resolution.

Pro-Zionist Secretary of State Summer Welles recognized that: "By direct order of the White House, every form of pressure, direct or indirect, was brought to bear by the American officials upon those countries outside the Moslem world that were known to be either uncertain or opposed to partition. Representatives or intermediaries were employed by the White House to make sure the necessary majority would at least be secured."²⁰

The General Assembly vote was postponed twice to give the Zionists and the Americans more time to bring to bear the necessary pressure to ensure adoption of the Partition Resolution. Truman may have resented Zionist pressure, yet that is precisely what he helped bring about: the imposition of the will of the few strong Zionists against the will of the many weak Arabs in Palestine. Truman may have been resentful, but he was also calculating. He was acutely aware of Zionist power in the United States.

In his memoirs, Truman attempted to cast his support for the Zionist goal of colonizing Palestine against the wishes of the Arab majority of its inhabitants, within the context of the Wilsonian commitment to the principle of self-determination: "The Balfour Declaration, promising the Jews the opportunity to re-establish a homeland in Palestine, had always seemed to me to go hand-in-hand with the noble policies of Woodrow Wilson, especially the principle of self-determination."²¹

Truman understood the Balfour Declaration to give self-determination to the Jewish minority in Palestine but seems to have given no thought, or may have been unaware of the existence of the Palestinian Arab majority. As George Lenczowski wryly observed:

“Generally, when issues of imperialism and colonialism are discussed, it is understood that self-determination means the right of the people subjugated by another nation to regain freedom and determine its own destiny; it does not mean the right of the colonizers to set up their own rule over the unwilling conquered people.”²²

It was not a question of the American president being sensitive to the noble policies of Woodrow Wilson about self-determination for the colonized people. It was a rather more mundane, and less lofty consideration that moved Truman in the direction of unreserved support for the Zionist program: simple domestic policy considerations, which he candidly admitted in justifying his decision to distance himself from the Roosevelt promise to Ibn Saud. In October 1945, Truman yielded to pressure from his Zionist advisor David Niles not to see four chiefs of American diplomatic missions in the Middle East recalled to report on deteriorating American–Arab relations. When Truman finally received the four American diplomats at the White House, he passively listened to their prepared statement, asked no questions, showed no interest in their concerns, and bluntly concluded the meeting by telling them: “I am sorry, gentlemen, but I have to answer to hundreds of thousands who are anxious for the success of Zionism. I do not have hundreds of thousands of Arabs among my constituents.”²³

Truman gave in to overwhelming Zionist pressure: “I do not think I ever had as much pressure and propaganda aimed at the White House as I had in this instance. The persistence of a few of the extreme Zionist leaders – actuated by political motives and engaging in political threats – disturbed and annoyed me. Some were even suggesting that we pressure sovereign nations into favorable votes at the General Assembly. I have never approved of the practice of the strong imposing its will on the weak whether among men or among nations.”²⁴

Notwithstanding Truman’s denial that he ever approved of bringing pressure to bear on sovereign nations to change their votes at the United Nations, American diplomats in the Truman administration did pressure sovereign nations to change their votes. The order to the American delegation to get the necessary vote for partition came directly from President Truman with the President’s advisors “threatening hell” if the campaign to secure the necessary vote were to fail.²⁵

Six vulnerable nations, which had indicated their intentions of voting against the Partition Resolution, became the target of intense

pressure: Haiti, Liberia, the Philippines, China, Ethiopia and Greece. All except Greece would be 'persuaded' to change their vote.²⁶ Bernard Baruch drove the point home to the French, desperate for Marshal Plan economic aid; William Bullit communicated Washington's wishes to the Chinese; the American Consul in Haiti told the President of that country that "for his own good", he ought to order the vote of his country changed.²⁷ Haiti changed its vote at the last minute after its chief delegate had previously attacked the Partition Resolution.

Congressman Sol Bloom, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, telephoned General Carlos P. Romulo, the Philippines delegate who had attacked the Partition Resolution on legal and moral grounds and was under specific instructions from President Roxas to vote against it. Romulo told Bloom that only the President back in the Philippines could change the decision.

Pressure was applied at the highest level in the Philippines and directly Romulo received a cable from the President at home telling him that "for the sake of our higher national interests he was giving instructions to our Philippines delegate at Lake Success to vote in favor of the partitioning".²⁸ The Philippines thus also changed its vote at the last minute. Liberia, whose government also came under American pressure, was another country that gave in and changed its vote at the last minute.

A telegram signed by twenty-six pro-Zionist American senators sent the day before the vote to thirteen UN delegations managed to change four votes to yes and seven votes from nay to abstention.²⁹ There were also bribes. In return for \$75,000 in cash one Latin-American delegate changed his vote; another turned down a bribe of \$45,000 but in the end was instructed by his government to vote for the Partition Resolution.³⁰

As a result of all this, the UN resolution recommending (not 'demanding', since it was adopted by the General Assembly not the Security Council) the partition of Palestine and providing the Zionists with a juridical basis for the establishment of Israel, was adopted by the necessary two-thirds majority thanks to the last-minute change of votes of Liberia, Haiti and the Philippines.

The then Pakistani Foreign Minister Sir Muhammed Zafrulla Khan regretted the heavy pressure to which the delegates were subjected: "We entertain no sense of grievance against those of our friends and fellow representatives who have been compelled under heavy pressure to change sides and to cast their votes in support of a proposal, the justice

and fairness of which does not recommend themselves to them. Our feeling for them is one of sympathy that they should have been placed in a position of such embarrassment between their judgement and conscience, on the one side, and the pressure to which they and their Governments were being subjected, on the other.”³¹

“Anglo–American concern for the Jewish vote”, observed Alfred Lilienthal in his massive study of *The Zionist Connection*, “forged the final disastrous and unjust decision . . . At the time of the partition vote there were only 650,000 Jews in Palestine while there were 1.3 million indigenous Palestinian Arabs, either Christian or Muslim. Under the partition plan, 56.4% percent of Palestine was given for a Zionist state to a people who constituted 33 percent of the population and owned about 5.67 percent of the land. Nothing so totally illustrates the devastating abnegation of Western professed ideal of self-determination . . . This is the ‘original sin’ which underlies the entire Palestine conflict . . . Why and how such basic facts regarding the creation of Israel . . . have been so successfully secreted from the American people requires a careful examination of a cover-up and a cover-up that have few parallels in the annals of man.”³²

The Arabs, who had unsuccessfully requested that the Palestine question be referred to the International Court of Justice, felt betrayed once more. The United Nations, committed to self-determination, was denying the majority of the people in Palestine their right to self-determination and independence. The League of Nations Mandate, administered temporarily as a “sacred trust of civilization” for the well-being of the inhabitants of the mandated territories, had allowed the implantation and the growth of an alien European culture in the midst of the Arab Palestinian society which, thanks to British oppression, had been deprived of independent self-development and was now prey to the ruthless drive for the transformation of Palestine by the Zionists, more powerful, more organized and well-connected to the various centres of imperial power. It should come as no surprise that the Palestinians rejected the Partition Resolution, which they viewed as another dictate by imperial powers.³³

Shortly after the adoption of the Partition Resolution in November 1947, the Zionists took the offensive in Palestine, certain that partition could only be implemented by force. As violence intensified in Palestine, the basic assumption of the Truman administration, that Palestine could be partitioned without violence, was proving to be fundamentally wrong.

George Kennan, author of the famous formula for the policy of containment, had become Director of Policy Planning Staff at the State Department. He reviewed the situation and concluded in January 1948 that “the US Government should face the fact that the partition of Palestine cannot be implemented without the use of force”, and that “the US would inevitably be called upon to supply a substantial portion of the money, troops and arms for this purpose”.³⁴

Kennan argued that any such role in forcing the partition of Palestine “would result in deep-seated antagonism for the US in many sections of the Moslem world over a period of many years”, and seriously endanger Western oil interests in the region which were vital for the reconstruction of Europe. At the same time, Kennan warned that American military intervention would invite a Russian military role in implementing partition. Kennan concluded that America should take no action in implementing partition and recommended that it should work instead towards the establishment of a federal state in Palestine or some form of UN trusteeship.³⁵

Partition was also opposed by other State Department officials including Dean Rusk, then Director of the State Department’s UN section, who argued that partition should be abandoned if “new situations” developed, and Secretary of Defence James Forrestal who feared that partition would antagonize the Arabs, undermine America’s oil supplies, dislocate its economy, threaten the Marshall Plan for European reconstruction and endanger America’s ability to wage war. Prophetically, Under-Secretary of State Robert Lovett predicted that the Zionist forces could defeat the Arabs and establish a Jewish state by force but that the area would become an arena of protracted conflict. Dean Rusk feared that such a conflict would give the Soviet Union the opening it needed to penetrate the Middle East.³⁶

The State Department was also opposed to, and outraged by, the pressure tactics used by the Zionists. “The techniques of pressure politics,” observed Frank Manuel in his pro-Zionist account of American–Palestine relations, “which the American Zionists used with striking success were resented as an invasion of the inner sanctum where the policy-makers were supposed to chart our course immune from such vulgar influences.”³⁷

The State Department argued that the United States should build its Middle East policy on strong relations with the Arabs. State officials argued that supporting a Jewish state in Palestine would violate the

principle of self-determination in Palestine, where the Palestinian Arabs still represented close to 70% of the population in spite of the massive Jewish influx from Europe. The State Department also felt that the action would alienate the Arabs, destabilize the whole region as a result of the forcible establishment of Israel, drive Arab regimes into close ties with the Soviet Union and open the Middle East to Soviet influence.

The American Military Also Opposes Partition

The American military also argued that the military need for continued access to Arab oil required good relations with the Arabs, which could be jeopardized by a American involvement on the side of a Jewish state and against the will of the Arab majority. Secretary of Navy and later Secretary of Defence James Forrestal was particularly anxious that American security interests in the region would be compromised by a pro-Jewish American policy in the Middle East. American military chiefs warned that American support for international Zionism would identify the United States with the Zionists' program of territorial conquests and political and military domination in the Middle East.

A Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) paper on "Force Requirements for Palestine", prepared in March 1948, presciently warned that "Zionist strategy will seek to involve the [United States] in a continuously widening and deepening series of operations intended to secure maximum Jewish objectives", which the document identified to be (a) initial Jewish sovereignty over a portion of Palestine, (b) acceptance by the great powers of the right to unlimited immigration, (c) the extension of Jewish sovereignty over all of Palestine, (d) the expansion of "Eretz Israel" into Transjordan and into portions of Lebanon and Syria, and (e) the establishment of Jewish military and economic hegemony over the entire Middle East.

The JCS document added: "All stages of this program are equally sacred to the fanatical concepts of Jewish leaders. The program is openly admitted by some leaders, and has been privately admitted to United States officials by responsible leaders of the presently dominant Jewish group – the Jewish Agency."³⁸

Secretary of State George Marshall himself was strongly opposed to Truman's assistant Clark Clifford's advice to the President to take into account the Jewish vote in all his decisions about Palestine. Marshall

argued that Clifford was urging a decision based on domestic political considerations while the problem in Palestine was international. Thus, when the United Nations Palestine Commission failed to make any progress on implementing partition and requested on February 24, 1948, that the Security Council furnish armed assistance for the implementation of partition, both State and Defence Departments were in agreement and opposed American military participation lest it give the Soviet Union a pretext for deploying their own forces in the region.

Truman Ignores Defence and State Department Advice

Moscow was interested in accelerating the end of British domination in the region and in weakening pro-Western feudal Arab regimes. The Soviet Union supported the Zionists in the belief that in supporting a Jewish state run by Zionists mostly from Eastern Europe and ostensibly dedicated to building a socialist and anti-imperialist state, Moscow would weaken Western influence in the region and gain an important anti-imperialist ally.

By March 1948, the Truman administration, increasingly pre-occupied with Soviet control of Eastern Europe and the rising Cold War tension, became more sensitive to warnings from the Department of State and Department of Defence that partition in Palestine would both enhance Soviet prestige and jeopardize American interests in the Arab world. A victory for the Zionists in Palestine came to be seen as a victory for the Soviet Union.

The State Department recommended to President Truman that if the Partition Resolution could not be implemented by peaceful means, then the United States should support an alternative to partition, such as a period of UN trusteeship. Truman approved the State Department recommendations 'in principle'. Accordingly, US Ambassador to the United Nations Warren Austin called on the Security Council, on March 19, to freeze the implementation of the Partition Resolution and establish instead a UN trusteeship for Palestine for an indefinite period until Arab and Jewish communities agreed on the form of future government.³⁹

The Zionists were furious and screamed betrayal. The flood of protest and the constant lobbying of the Zionists and their supporters, and the persistence of Clark Clifford who kept advising the President

not to miss an opportunity to capitalize on the Jewish vote, finally persuaded Truman to support partition again. Truman gradually became convinced that he would gain nothing from a policy that tried to be fair to the Palestinian Arabs but alienated his Jewish voters. After agreeing to support partition, he also agreed to a speedy recognition of the Jewish state. This was opposed by Secretary Marshall but Clark Clifford, Ed Flynn, the Bronx Democratic Party leader, and other pro-Zionist elements strongly “argued domestic politics, and waved about Jewish votes and campaign contributions, and finally convinced the President, over stout resistance”.⁴⁰

Faced with opposition from the Soviet Union at the United Nations, and strong opposition from American Zionists, the Truman administration decided to abandon its trusteeship proposal. The way was now open for the forcible dismemberment of Palestine.

NOTES

- 1 See Harold Macmillan, *Tides of Fortunes, 1945–55* (London: Macmillan, 1969), p. 141.
- 2 See Francis Williams, *A Prime Minister Remembers: The War and Post-War Memoirs of the Rt. Hon. Earl Attlee* (London: Heinmann, 1961), pp. 181–201.
- 3 Jacob C. Hurewitz, *The Struggle for Palestine* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1950), p. 269.
- 4 See Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), p. 27.
- 5 Hurewitz, *The Struggle for Palestine*, op. cit., p. 269.
- 6 *The New York Times*, December 8, 1947, p. 12.
- 7 Kermit Roosevelt, “The Partition of Palestine: A Lesson in Pressure Politics”, *The Middle East Journal*, vol. 2, no. 1, January 1948, pp. 1–16, p. 13.
- 8 Walid Khalidi (ed.), *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem until 1948* (Beirut: The Institute For Palestine Studies, 1971), p. ixv.
- 9 Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs, Vol. II: Years of Trial and Hope* (New York: Doubleday, 1958), pp. 134–35
- 10 Joseph Alsop, *Washington Post*, December 10, 1947.
- 11 Walid Khalidi, *From Haven to Conquest*, op. cit., p. ixvii
- 12 Margaret Truman, *Harry S. Truman* (New York: Pocket Books, 1974), p. 425.
- 13 *Ibid.*, p. 420.
- 14 Albert Hyamson, *Palestine Under the Mandate: 1920–1948* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1976), p. 200.

- 15 T. G. Fraser, *The USA and the Middle East Since World War II* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), p. 31.
- 16 Walid Khalidi, *From Haven to Conquest*, op. cit., p. ixix.
- 17 See "Bi-nationalism not Partition", in Walid Khalidi, *From Haven to Conquest*, op. cit., pp. 645–95.
- 18 Ibid., p. ixix.
- 19 Fraser, *The USA and the Middle East*, op. cit., p. 30.
- 20 Summer Welles, *We Need Not Fail* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1948), p. 374.
- 21 Truman, *Memoirs*, op. cit., p. 133.
- 22 George Lenczowski, *American Presidents and the Middle East* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), p. 24.
- 23 William Eddy, *FDR Meets Ibn Saud* (New York: American Friends of the Middle East, 1954), p. 37.
- 24 Truman, *Memoirs*, op. cit., p. 225.
- 25 Fraser, *The USA and the Middle East*, op. cit., p. 33.
- 26 See Eddy, F. D. R. Meets Ibn Saud, op. cit., pp. 36–37. See also John Snetsinger, *Truman, the Jewish Vote and the Creation of Israel* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1974). See also Kermit Roosevelt, "The Partition of Palestine", op. cit.
- 27 *Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers 1947, Vol. V, The Near East and Africa* (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1971), p. 1309, quoted in Lilienthal, *The Zionist Connection: What Price Peace?*, (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1978), p. 68.
- 28 See General Carlos P. Romulo, "The Philippines Changes its Vote 1947", in Walid Khalidi, *From Haven to Conquest*, op. cit., pp. 723–726, p. 725.
- 29 Alfred Lilienthal, *The Zionist Connection: What Price Peace?*, op. cit., p. 66.
- 30 Robert J. Donovan, *Conflict and Crisis: The Presidency of Harry S. Truman, 1945–1948* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), p. 331, quoted in Lilienthal, *The Zionist Connection*, op. cit., p. 66.
- 31 United Nations, Official Records of the 2nd Session of the General Assembly (Lake Success, 1947), Plenary Meetings, II, p. 1312, quoted in Lilienthal, *The Zionist Connection*, op. cit., p. 67. See also Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, "Thanksgiving Day at Lake Success", in Walid Khalidi, *From Haven to Conquest*, op. cit., pp. 709–22.
- 32 Lilienthal, *The Zionist Connection*, op. cit., pp. 97–100.
- 33 See Maxime Rodinson, "Israel, fait colonial?" in *Les Temps Modernes*, 22e année 1967, no. 253 bis in the special issue devoted to "Le conflit israélo-arabe", p. 59.
- 34 Kennan to Marshall, January 20 1948, *Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers 1948, Vol. V, Part 2*, pp. 545–54, quoted in Fraser, *The US and the Middle East*, op. cit., p. 37.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 See Walter Millis (ed.) *James Forrestal: The Forrestal Diaries* (New York: Viking, 1951), p. 410. See also Truman, *Memoirs*, op. cit., p. 162.
- 37 Frank E. Manuel, *The Realities of American–Palestine Relations* (Washington D. C.: Public Affairs Press, 1949), p. 338.
- 38 See Stephen Green, *Taking Sides: America's Secret Relations with a Militant Israel* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1984), pp. 20–21.

- 39 US Committee on Foreign Relations, "A Decade of American Foreign Policy: Basic Documents, 1941–49" (Washington, 1950), p. 840.
- 40 Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, *The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1945–54* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 425.

The Use of Force and Displacement of the Arabs from Palestine

The Zionist–Palestinian confrontation which started with the Balfour Declaration in 1917, and the arrival of the Zionist Commission in Palestine in 1918, culminated in open, violent and protracted clashes that Israeli historian Benny Morris described as a civil war, following the announcement of the UN Partition vote. It quickly took on the form of warfare.

Judah Magnes, President of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a proponent of the bi-national solution to the Palestine question, had predicted two months before the Partition Resolution vote that the “partition plan would not stop the terrorist activities of Jewish groups and having secured partition through terror, they would attempt to secure the rest of the country for the Jews in the same way”.¹

The Zionists celebrated the Partition Resolution for it gave a semblance of international recognition for their demand for a Jewish state in Palestine. However, they did not give up their larger plan to make all of Palestine a Jewish state. Thus, while Ben-Gurion accepted the parts of the Partition Resolution favourable to the Zionist cause, such as the establishment of a Jewish state on more than half of Palestine for a Jewish minority that had grown to only one-third of the population, and the transfer of the Mandatory Power’s properties to the new Jewish state, he rejected the parts of the Resolution he did not like.

He immediately rejected the proposed borders for the Jewish state, and also rejected the transition period for implementation and the proposed establishment of an Arab state. “By some twist of vision,” observed Israeli writer Simha Flapan, “historians have generally taken Ben-Gurion’s acceptance of the idea of a Jewish state in less than the whole of Palestine as the equivalent of an acceptance of the entire UN resolution. Yet, . . . Ben-Gurion had always viewed partition as the first

step toward a Jewish state in the whole of Palestine, including Transjordan, the Golan Heights, and southern Lebanon.”²

Before the Partition Resolution, he had already told the Zionist leadership: “We shall not lay down territorial boundaries”, a phrase which Ben-Gurion’s biographer said “spoke for itself”, for indeed the Zionist leadership was determined to use the Partition as a first step toward the planned aggrandizement of the Jewish state. In a statement which foreshadowed Zionist plans for the expulsion of Palestinians, Ben-Gurion told a Zionist meeting four days after the partition vote: “The total population of the Jewish state at the time of its establishment will be about a million people, almost 40 percent non-Jews. Such a composition does not provide a stable basis for a Jewish state. The fact must be seen in all of its clarity and acuteness. Such a composition does not even give us absolute assurance that control will remain in the hands of the Jewish majority.” Ben-Gurion then added that arrangements are never final: “not with regard to the regime, not with regard to borders, and not with regard to international agreements”.³

Zionist acceptance of the Partition Resolution was therefore a tactical manoeuvre, a first victory. The partition offered them something when they had nothing. It could only be perceived as a tremendous victory since it gave them juridical justification to claim sovereignty over more than 52% of Palestine when they possessed less than 6% of the land and represented barely 30% of the population.

In Palestine, on March 20, 1948, one day after the Americans presented their trusteeship proposal, Ben-Gurion arrogantly dismissed the importance of the United Nations for the Zionists. The establishment of the Jewish state, he said, was not in fact “subject to the United Nations resolution of November 29 – even though the resolution was of great moral and political value – but on our ability here in this country to achieve a decision by force. By means of our own strength the state shall arise, even now.”⁴

Ben-Gurion’s biographer added that as usual Ben-Gurion translated his words into actions, faits accomplis: “His first act was political: the establishment of a thirteen-member provisional government . . . This was followed by a military move. It now became vital for the Jews to take the military initiative.”⁵

Most Palestinians, however, and contrary to the dominant propaganda, while certainly opposing the unjust partition of their country,

seemed resigned to the fait accompli, and “gradually realized that partition”, wrote Israeli writer Simha Flapan, “was unavoidable and irreversible. The evidence is so overwhelming that the question arises how the myth of a Palestinian jihad against the Jews could survive for so long.”⁶

Ben-Gurion himself was unequivocal in his assessment of the Palestinians’ reaction: “It is now clear, without the slightest doubt,” he wrote to Moshe Sharett, “that were we to face the Palestinians alone, everything would be all right. They, the decisive majority of them, do not want to fight us, and all of them together are unable to stand up to us.”⁷ The official *History of the Haganah*, describes the Palestinians who had arms as “more concerned with defending their villages or neighbourhoods than with going out to attack the Jewish forces”.⁸

With only about one thousand Palestinians engaged in the so-called Arab Liberation Army, the Zionist leadership was divided as to how to react to the isolated incidents of violence. Treat them as disturbances and try to contain them? Or, as Simha Flapan reported, respond to them as if engaged in a total war: “exploiting Arab weakness and passivity in order to intensify the disintegration of Arab society and win ‘more land and less Arabs’”. Under Ben-Gurion’s influence and with the support of Yigael Yadin, the army Chief of Operations, and Moshe Dayan, the total war option won out.

Both the Haganah and the terrorist underground organizations engaged in it. Thus, Ben-Gurion demanded, on December 19, 1947, that “we adopt the system of aggressive defence; with every Arab attack we must respond with a decisive blow: the destruction of the place or the expulsion of the residents along with the seizure of the place”.⁹

When the partition vote was announced, the “entire Yishuv”, observed an eyewitness with the British army in Palestine, Major R. D. Wilson, “devoted itself to two days of celebration and thanksgiving. Such elation was only natural, although it was conducted with a certain ostentation which infuriated the Arabs and was partially responsible for the riots and bloodshed which followed.”¹⁰

The Arabs mourned the day and went on a general strike. The British, who set May 14 for their departure from Palestine, decided not to lose any more men on a cause already lost. Their policy was to watch the violence which erupted and leave the two communities to fight it out, having previously actively helped one of them while keeping

the other captive, for the final confrontation. Arab mobs vented their anger by stoning Jewish vehicles and the Haganah, which came out into the open.

As Major Wilson reported, from December 1947 onwards, the Irgun directed its terrorist violence principally against the Arabs, as the Stern Gang devoted energy and time to “particularly bestial attacks on Arab villages, in which they showed not the slightest discrimination for women and children, whom they killed as opportunity offered”.¹¹

But it was not until December 30, reported Major Wilson, that “the first real major incident took place – a communal riot at the C. R. L. oil refinery at Haifa. It started when I. Z. L. [Irgun Z’vai Leumi] gangsters threw two bombs from a passing car among a large group of Arab employees waiting for transport outside the refinery”, killing six Palestinian Arabs and wounding forty. Arab mobs went berserk and attacked Jewish workers at the refinery. When the riots were over some forty-one Jews had been killed and forty-eight wounded.

Major Wilson observed: “Despite the fact that this massacre was the direct outcome of the initial attack by the I. Z. L. which caused some fifty casualties to the Arabs, the Haganah felt itself obliged to carry out a reprisal. The following night the Arab village of Balad es Sheik, which lies three miles south-east of Haifa, was attacked by a strong party of armed Haganah, who entered the village dressed as Arabs under heavy covering fire from the high ground. Firing sub-machine guns and throwing grenades into the houses, they succeeded in killing 14 Arabs, of whom 10 were women and children, and wounding 11.”¹²

The Expulsion of the Indigenous Palestinian People

One of the fundamental aims of Zionism had always been to “make Palestine as Jewish as England is English”, as the often-quoted formula went. Given that the Palestinian Arabs could not be expected to voluntarily give up their homes, lands and country, the Zionist leadership conceded that their design on Palestine would necessarily involve hardship for the indigenous population, but they rationalized it with the doctrine of the lesser evil: the moral responsibility for displacing the indigenous people is less of an evil than that involved in not pursuing the Zionist goal of providing the Jews with a haven away from European persecution.

As early as 1911 Zionist leaders had debated the concept of expulsion which, to disguise the immorality of expelling a nation from its own country, was referred to as “transfer” of the Arab population of Palestine. The Peel Partition Plan recommended, at the urging of Weizmann, in the British Royal Commission Report of 1937, an “exchange of land and population”. On reflecting on this provision Ben-Gurion stated: “We must expel Arabs and take their place.”¹³

The expulsion of the indigenous people of Palestine was also justified in practical terms, namely, that the the country could not accommodate two nations. Joseph Weitz, the administrator responsible for Jewish colonization confided in his diary in 1940: “Between ourselves it must be clear that there is no room for both peoples together in this country . . . We shall not achieve our goal of being an independent people with the Arabs in this small country. The only solution is a Palestine, at least Western Palestine (west of the Jordan river) without Arabs . . . And there is no other way than to transfer the Arabs from here to the neighbouring countries, to transfer all of them; not one village, not one tribe, should be left.”¹⁴

The Zionists were also successful in having the notion of forcible transfer of Arab population endorsed, in 1944, by the British Labour Party Executive Committee’s report, which was officially adopted by the party’s annual conference. The report recommended that: “Palestine surely is a case, on human grounds and to promote a stable settlement, for a transfer of population. *Let the Arabs be encouraged to move out, as the Jews move in.*” (Italics in the original.)¹⁵ Former American President Herbert Hoover also advocated, in 1945, the transfer of the Palestinians and suggested Iraq as a recipient country.

The UN Partition Resolution had recommended giving the Jews, who held less than 6% of the land and represented about 30% of the population in Palestine (mostly recent immigrants from Europe), about 52% of the country containing a majority of the arable land. The partition scheme left the area recommended for the establishment of a Jewish state with a precarious demographic balance of 498,000 Jews and 407,000 Palestinian Arabs.

Operational Plans: Destroying Palestinian Urban Communities

Ben-Gurion appointed a ‘Transfer Committee’, which recommended to him in October 1947 that the number of Arabs under Jewish control

should not amount to more than 15% of the Jewish population. Ben-Gurion told the Jewish Agency, shortly after creating the Transfer Committee, "I am for compulsory Transfer; I don't see anything immoral in it."¹⁶

Israeli professor Ilan Pappé explained the other functions of the Transfer Committee thus:

The Transfer Committee was part of the outfit in pre-1948 Palestine that belonged to the Jewish Agency, to the Jewish leadership. And its main position was actually to evaluate the 'quality' of the 500 – 600 Arab villages, i.e. to find out which village had fertile land, what was the wealth of each and each village. It was preparing for the day that Israel would take over these villages. And then, after the ethnic cleansing took place, it was renamed and became more like a distribution committee. It had to divide the spoils between the various Kibbutzim movements, and the various Jewish agencies that dealt with Settlement. And so it was an important official facet of the leadership. But it was all conceived by the leader of the Jewish Agency and later the first Prime Minister of Israel, David Ben-Gurion.¹⁷

The Zionists therefore prepared operational plans that anticipated the rapidly evolving political and military realities, taking into account the ultimate strategic objective of the necessary destruction of Palestinian society, the expulsion of its people, and the taking over of Palestine. In February 1945, a general military plan known as Plan Aleph (Plan A) had been drawn up as a first step toward the implementation of the Rhodesia-like strategy of a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI). To deal with the possibility that Arab help would come to the rescue of the Palestinians, Plan A was replaced with a new general military plan, Plan Bet (Plan B). After the UN General Assembly adopted the Partition Resolution in November 1947, the Zionists accepted that Palestinian resistance to the partitioning of their country was inevitable. They therefore drew up two new general plans: Plan Gimmel (Plan C) and Plan Dalet (Plan D).

Plan C was designed to enable Zionist forces to seize strategic points vacated by the withdrawing British forces, while terrorizing the Palestinian Arab population and undermining its will to resistance. The plan took advantage of the pattern of British withdrawal, evacuating first the areas of Jewish concentration starting with Tel Aviv and moving towards areas of Palestinian Arab concentrations.

As Khalidi put it: “Given the balance of power inside Palestine, which was crushingly in favour of the Zionists – a fact of which all parties were well aware – the British withdrawal was an open invitation for a Zionist take-over of the country . . . Given the total absence of central Palestinian Arab political and military control (thanks to British repression) and the existence of powerful, purposeful, multifaceted central institutional Zionist control (thanks partly to British immobilism in the face of Zionist provocation), the pattern of British withdrawal, even when it affected areas of Arab concentration, merely *increased* the fragmentation of the Arab scene while it furthered the cumulative consolidation and extension of Jewish power.”¹⁸

British complicity with the Zionist project went further. For, while London withheld arms deliveries from the Arabs, departing British forces sold arms, including tanks, to the Zionists.¹⁹

By January 1948, four months before the Arab armies intervened, Ben-Gurion’s objective of destruction and expulsion (today it would be called ethnic cleansing) followed a well-laid out deliberate strategy. As he noted in his diary:

The strategic objective [of the Jewish forces] was to destroy the urban communities, which were the most organized and politically conscious sections of the Palestinian people. This was not done by house-to-house fighting inside the cities and towns, but by the conquest and destruction of the rural areas surrounding most of the towns. This technique led to the collapse and surrender of Haifa, Jaffa, Tiberias, Safed, Acre, Beit-Shan, Lydda, Ramleh, Majdal and Beersheba.²⁰

According to Zionist historian Netanel Lorch, although by the end of February 1948 Arab actions “were still sporadic, directed from various centers, often the result of ‘private enterprise’”, the Haganah was already engaged in ‘Operation 35’ whose objective was “long-range penetration into Arab areas”.²¹ As Sir John Bagot Glubb reported, some Zionist leaders hoped, and fully expected, that their strategy of terror would result in the massive exodus of Palestinian Arabs.²²

With the tacit support of the Zionist leadership, the dissident Jewish groups Irgun and the Stern Gang carried out raids against Arab villages in the area designated as a reduced Arab Palestine by the Partition Resolution. Ben-Gurion and the Zionist leadership were thus able to

play a double game: they claimed that their military actions were purely retaliations against Palestinian violence, but they turned a blind eye to the attacks of the underground gangs of Begin and Shamir who carried their terror to innocent Arab villages outside the area designated by the Partition Resolution to the Jewish state. Thus, as Simha Flapan put it: "Ben-Gurion could simultaneously expand the borders and condemn those who were instrumental in doing it."²³

Bringing Plan D Forward

Despite the demoralizing effect of Zionist 'retaliations' against Palestinian resistance to partition, it seemed clear to the outside world that the Palestinian resistance was stiff and determined and that partition could only be implemented by greater exercise of force by the Zionists, thus almost certainly provoking the reluctant entry of Arab armies into Palestine.

By March, the State Department and the White House announced that they were considering alternative plans to partition for Palestine and the notion of trusteeship began circulating. The Zionists immediately moved into high gear, putting political pressure directly on the White House where Weizmann was received, on March 18, by Truman who offered him the commitment that he supported the establishment and the recognition of a Jewish state in Palestine which included the Negev. This essentially cleared the way for the Zionists in Palestine to put into action their Plan D for the takeover of Palestine.

The urgency of the implementation of Plan D also came from the fact that by March 1947 there had been no massive Arab exodus. This was in spite of organized and systematic Jewish terror campaigns against Arab residential areas and repeated raids against sleeping Arab villages carried out under the operational strategy of Plan C. It seemed that the demographic ratios within the future Jewish state would upset Zionist calculations and produce an unstable basis for the Jewish state.

On March 10, Plan D was adopted by the Haganah as a blueprint for the destruction of Palestinian society.

Plan D was a comprehensive strategy of military offensives designed to replace the previous plans. With frankness Zionist historian Colonel Netanel Lorch wrote that: "Zero hour for Plan D was to arrive when British evacuation had reached a point where the Haganah would be

reasonably safe from British intervention and when mobilization had progressed to a point where the implementation of a large-scale plan would be feasible.”²⁴

Plan D was the master-plan whose objective was to secure, by May 15 when the British withdrawal would have been completed and a juridical vacuum created in Palestine, the area recommended by the Partition Resolution to be a Jewish state, plus the seizure and retention of as much of the Arab territories as possible from the rest of Palestine.

Plan D also provided for the “expulsion over the borders of the local Arab population in the event of opposition to our attacks . . . and the defence of contiguous Jewish settlement in Arab areas, including the ‘temporary’ capture of Arab bases on the other side of the border”.²⁵

As Israeli historian Benny Morris documented, when the United States introduced, on March 19, 1947, a motion at the UN to defer partition and establish a UN trusteeship regime in Palestine, the Zionists decided to embark on a war of conquest, especially after the arrival of major shipments of modern arms from Czechoslovakia.

The Zionist leadership decided that it was time to implement a military strategy designed to bring all of Palestine under Jewish control, and put the fait accompli before the United States and the whole world. As Colonel Lorch frankly admitted, by March 1948 the Zionist military leadership had decided that “The only solution is to take the initiative into our own hands, to try to achieve a military decision by going over to the offensive.”²⁶

On March 31, Ben-Gurion made the strategic decision of bringing forward the implementation of Plan D. Colonel Lorch explained in subtle language how Plan D marked the end of Palestinian resistance and the beginning of the Zionist drive to take over all of Palestine: “It was only subsequently, early in April, that the initiative passed into Jewish hands, when Operation Nachshon contrived to open the corridor to Jerusalem, and with the carrying out of Plan D the Palestinian Arabs and Kaukji’s “Liberation Army” were thrown on to the defensive, and ultimately routed.”²⁷

Lorch tried to rationalize the Plan of Zionist conquest by invoking the need for the defence of Jewish settlements: “If Jewish Jerusalem could not continue to exist without the capture of the Arab village of Kastel, blocking its approaches, then Kastel must be captured; if Jewish Haifa was not allowed to ‘co-exist’ peacefully with Arab Haifa, Arab

Haifa must be captured. Only Arab bases inside the Jewish State were destined to be permanently held; other would be held only temporarily as long as the need existed.”²⁸

But subsequent historians, in particular Benny Morris, have been more forthcoming in describing the Zionist offensive for what it was, a war of conquest designed not only to empty the future Jewish state of its Arab inhabitants but also to bring as much of Palestine as possible under Zionist control, by force: “Palestinian Arab strengths were well-suited to the nature of the early months of the war”, wrote Benny Morris, “when fighting was dispersed, disorganized, small-scale and highly localized. The moment the Haganah switched to the offensive and launched large-scale, highly organized and sustained operations, the enemy’s weakness came to the fore – and its military formations fell apart . . . In the course of the first week of April . . . it was clear that a dramatic conceptual change had taken place and that the Yishuv was now fighting a war of conquest as well as survival. This was prefigured in the Haganah’s Plan D, drawn up by Haganah operations chief Yigael Yadin and his staff and submitted to the general staff on March 10. The plan was to have been set in motion in May as the last British troops were withdrawing . . . Its aim . . . meant crushing the Palestinian Arabs’ military power and subduing their urban neighbourhoods and rural settlements in the areas earmarked for Jewish statehood . . . Blocs of settlements outside the statehood areas . . . were also to be secured and linked up.”²⁹

Another Israeli historian, Baruch Kimmerling, professor of Sociology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, relying on original Israeli sources, described his findings thus:

I was shocked to discover that a major ‘purification’ of the land (the term ‘ethnic cleansing’ was unknown in that period) from its Arab Palestinian inhabitant was done during the 1948 War by the Jewish military and para-military forces. During this research I found, solely based on Israeli sources, that about 350 Arab villages were ‘abandoned’ and their 3.25 million dunums of rural land, were confiscated and became, in several stages, the property of the Israeli state or the Jewish National Fund. I also found that Moshe Dayan, then Minister of Agriculture, disclosed that about 700,000 Arabs who ‘left’ the territories had owned four million dunums of land.³⁰

One of the reasons why Plan D called for conquest and ethnic cleansing of Palestinian Arabs was that the Jews had legally acquired only a miniscule portion of Palestine, which could not possibly serve the goal of establishing a Jewish state. The land needed for the state had to be literally taken by force. Professor Kimmerling stated: "Another finding was that from 1882 until 1948, all the Jewish companies (including the Jewish National Fund, an organ of the World Zionist Organization) and private individuals in Palestine had succeeded in buying only about 7 percent of the total lands in British Palestine. All the rest was taken by sword and nationalized during the 1948 war and after."³¹ The ethnic cleansing was as systematic as it was thorough: "the Jewish military forces conquered about 20,000 square kilometers of territory (compared with the 14,000 square kilometers granted them by the UN Partition Resolution) and purified them almost completely from their Arab inhabitants. About 800,000 Arab inhabitants lived on the territories before they fell under Jewish control following the 1948 war. Fewer than 100,000 Arabs remained there under Jewish control after the cease fire."

Plan D Goes Into Action

General Yigael Yadin, Head of the Operations Branch of the Israeli unified armed forces, launched Plan D on March 10, 1948. In the plan's preamble, Yadin stated the objective of Plan D thus:

The destruction of [Arab] villages (by fire, blowing up and mining) – especially of those villages over which we cannot gain [permanent] control. Gaining of control will be accomplished in accordance with the following instructions: The encircling of the village and the search of it. In the event of resistance – the destruction of the resisting forces and the expulsion of the population beyond the boundaries of the State.³²

Arab villages in fact were not only captured, they were literally wiped from the map to make way for Jewish villages in their place. Morris reported: "Brigade and battalion commanders were given permission to raze or empty and mine hostile or potentially hostile Arab villages."³³

It was a race against the clock. The British were to officially give up sovereignty over Palestine on May 14, and Palestinian opposition

to partition was likely to be given a boost from neighbouring Arab countries, which thus far, under the pretext of not wanting to confront the British, had avoided any significant intervention to rescue Palestinian society from destruction by the Zionist forces.

Plan D consisted of thirteen military operations essentially designed to de-Arabize as much of Palestine as possible and to solve once and for all the inconvenient fact that the Palestinian Arabs were present everywhere in Palestine and possessed over 93% of the land. It was the codename given by the Zionist political leadership, the Zionist High Command, and the commanders of the thirteen military operations of Plan D, who had no doubt about the nature and objectives of Plan D: a war of conquest designed to achieve the destruction of the Palestinian society and the dispersion and expulsion of its population, to ensure the establishment of a Jewish state as a *fait accompli*.

Addressing the Zionist Executive on April 7, David Ben-Gurion referred to the strategy behind the plan: "Let us resolve not to be content with merely defensive tactics, but at the right moment to attack all along the line and not just within the confines of the Jewish state and the borders of Palestine."³⁴ "As April [1948] began," wrote Ben-Gurion, "our War of Independence swung decisively from defence to attack."³⁵

Full-scale offensive Jewish military operations were launched against pre-determined Arab targets with the object of bringing much of Palestine under Zionist control. Of Plan D's thirteen military offensive operations, eight were launched against Arab targets outside the area designated as a Jewish state by the UN Partition Resolution.³⁶

By April 1948 the Zionists had launched their full-scale war of conquest to take over Palestine, well before the regular Arab armies finally intervened on May 15. If the Zionists did not conquer all of Palestine during their war of conquest, it was only because of the entry of the Arab armies into the war to save what was left of Palestine. This was candidly recognized by Yigal Allon, the head of the Palmach (the regular fighting force of the Haganah): "Thanks to the local offensive war [i.e. plans C and D], the continuity of the Jewish territories was accomplished and also the penetrating of our forces into Arab areas . . . If it wasn't for the Arab invasion there would have been no stop to the expansion of the forces of western Israel, because in this stage most of the local enemy forces were paralyzed."³⁷

Terror Tactics

The decision to take the offensive and launch a war of conquest was designed to accomplish two objectives: (1) to empty the area recommended as a Jewish state by the UN Partition Resolution of its Arab inhabitants and (2) to bring as much of Palestine as possible under Jewish control. To accomplish these two objectives, the Zionists relied on tactics of terror, massacre and the destruction of homes, villages and towns, to expel and induce the flight of the Palestinian Arabs.

One of the techniques used by the Haganah to accomplish the twin aim of destruction and terror and induce flight was the night raids on Arab villages. During these night raids, British Major Wilson reported: "Haganah men would first silently place explosive charges around the stone houses and drench the wooden window and door frames in petrol, and then open fire, simultaneously dynamiting and burning the sleeping inhabitants to death."³⁸

Another terror technique widely employed was a mortar-shell nicknamed by the Zionists the *Davidka*, which hurled 60 pounds of high explosive inaccurately in urban Arab areas with a devastating psychological effect. An Israeli officer described for the benefit of the readers of the US Marine Corps professional magazine, in an article entitled "All's Fair . . ." how the barrel-bomb, barrels filled with explosive and petrol and fitted with rubber tires containing the explosive device, were rolled down the sharply sloping alleys of Arab urban quarters and towns until they crashed into doorways causing an inferno of explosions.³⁹

The Israeli officer also described how Zionist radio stations and loudspeakers mounted on armoured cars and touring a targeted area would work to induce panic. They suggested to the Arab population that unless they fled, they would catch cholera and typhus, and that even 'innocent people' who remained behind would be targeted to pay a heavy price for Palestinian attacks on Jews. The psychological blitz also included loudspeakers mounted on jeeps broadcasting, amid barrel bombs, recorded sounds of horror and shrieks and wails of frightened Arab women occasionally interrupted by "a sepulchral voice calling out in Arabic: 'Save your souls, all ye faithful! Flee for your lives! The Jews are using poison gas and atomic weapons. Run for your lives in the name of Allah.'⁴⁰

Massacre at Deir Yassein

The ultimate in terror took the form of cold-blooded massacres perpetrated by Zionist groups against the Palestinian people. The Zionists recognized that the new Jewish State would have to somehow get rid of, or significantly reduce, its Arab population, which under the UN partition plan would almost equal in number the Jews in the proposed Jewish state. In December 1947, when a British officer of the Arab Legion asked a Jewish official of the Palestine administration about the anticipated racial problem in a Jewish state in which the Palestinian Arabs were equal in number to the Jews, the Jewish official responded: "Oh no! That will be fixed. A few calculated massacres will soon get rid of them." Sir John Bagot Glubb observed: "The speaker was not a terrorist. He was a respectable moderate Jewish official, employed in the mandatory government."⁴¹

One of the most significant episodes of the process of terrorizing the indigenous population took place during that period. The Zionist offensive strategy put into action with Plan Dalet began with Operation Nachshon, whose objective was the carving out of a corridor linking Tel Aviv with Jerusalem. Operation Nachshon called for the destruction and evacuation of twenty Arab villages, one of which was a particularly peaceful village in the suburbs of Jerusalem called Deir Yassein. It has since been obliterated from the map but its name lives on in the collective memory of the Palestinian people.

Deir Yassin, which lay outside the area recommended by the UN Partition Resolution for the formation of a Jewish State, was known for having refused to be used by Arab volunteers as a base for attacks against Jewish lines of communications into Jerusalem. Deir Yassin was also known for the fact that its inhabitants had, as admitted by Israeli historian Jon Kimche, cooperated with the Jewish Agency.⁴²

In the early hours of Friday April 9, 1948, the Irgun, in collaboration with the Stern Gang and with the knowledge and assistance of the Haganah, raided Deir Yassein as its people slept unsuspectingly. The Jewish gang members cold-bloodedly slaughtered 250 men, women and children, many of whom had been mutilated and raped.⁴³ David Shippler of the *New York Times* cited Red Cross documents showing that the Zionist attackers "lined men, women, and children up against the walls and shot them".⁴⁴

According to the Zionist Jerusalem Shai (internal intelligence) commander Levy, 'the conquest of the village was carried out with great

cruelty. Whole families – women, old people, children – were killed, and there were piles of dead [in various places]. Some of the prisoners moved to places of incarceration, including women and children, were murdered viciously by their captors.” The following day, April 13, he reported: “LHI [the Stern Gang] members tell of the barbaric behaviour of the IZL toward the prisoners and the dead. They also related that the IZL [the Irgun] men raped a number of Arab girls and murdered them afterward.”⁴⁵

“Whole families”, wrote one Israeli historian, “were riddled with bullets and grenade fragments and buried when houses were blown up on top of them, men, women, and children were mowed down as they emerged from houses; individuals were taken aside and shot. At the end of the battle, groups of old men, women, and children were trucked through West Jerusalem’s streets in a kind of ‘victory parade’ and then dumped in (Arab) East Jerusalem.”⁴⁶

Another Israeli account reported that 25 Palestinian men were taken and paraded in the back of a truck in the streets of Jerusalem so as to send a message to those Palestinians who had not yet fled their homes. “After [the parade],” wrote an Israeli eyewitness from the Palmach, “they were then thrown into a quarry between Givat Shaul and Deir Yassin and shot in cold-blood”.⁴⁷

When the systematic killing was over, a final body count of 254 was reported by the *New York Times* on April 13, 1948. The cemetery was later bulldozed and Deir Yassin was wiped off the map. By September, Orthodox Jewish immigrants from Poland, Rumania and Slovakia were settled there. The centre of the village was renamed Givat Shaul Bet. The land of Deir Yassin became part of Jerusalem and is now known simply as the area between Givat Shaul and the settlement of Har Nof.

Menachem Begin, the leader of the Irgun who had gained notoriety when he organized the blowing up of King David Hotel on July 22, 1946,⁴⁸ took pride in the Deir Yassin massacre. He congratulated his men on a splendid job and would later pride himself on the terror Deir Yassin planted in the hearts of the Arab Palestinians. In the first American edition of his book *The Revolt*, Begin wrote that after Deir Yassin the Palestinians were “seized with limitless panic and started to flee for their lives. This mass flight soon turned into a mad, uncontrollable stampede. Of the about 800,000 Arabs who lived on the present territory of the state of Israel, only some 165,000 are still living there.”⁴⁹

The massacre was condemned by Jewish American organizations and led a group of 27 prominent American Jews, including Albert Einstein, to write a letter to the *New York Times*, published on December 4, 1948, to protest against Menachem Begin's visit to the United States. The letter described Begin's party 'The Freedom Party' as "closely akin in its organization, methods, political philosophy, and social appeal to the Nazi and Fascist parties". It went on to strongly condemn Begin and his gang: "A shocking example was their behavior in the Arab village of Deir Yassin . . . The terrorists, far from being ashamed of their act, were proud of this massacre, publicized it widely, and invited all the foreign correspondents present in the country to view the heaped corpses and general havoc at Deir Yassin."

Seeing the horrors and indignation the massacre evoked in the international public opinion, the Zionist leadership dissociated itself from Begin's terrorist gang and its actions. But Aryeh Yitzhaki, an Israeli historian of the Haganah, reported years later that the Deir Yassein massacre was "in line with dozens of attacks carried out at the time by the Haganah and Palmach, in the course of which houses full of elderly people, women, and children were blown up".⁵⁰ In fact, by the end of the 1947–48 war, the Haganah (later the Israel Defense Forces, or IDF) had burned, blown up and brought about the total destruction of 350 Arab villages and towns situated in areas assigned to the Jewish state and areas outside it which had been conquered by the Zionist forces.⁵¹

The Expulsion

Deir Yassin became the massacre with the most emotive resonance in the collective psyche of the Palestinian people, a powerful symbol of their victimization, and a constitutive element of their history of dispossession and displacement. However, it was not an isolated incident perpetrated by a gang of marginal fanatics, as the Israeli labour party leaders subsequently claimed. It symbolized and embodied the Zionist approach to the original inhabitants of Palestine: conquest, displacement and a strategy of terror and massacres as "a method of expulsion and extermination".

This much has now been recognized by a number of Israelis. On June 9, 1979, Israeli newspaper *Davar* published the testimony of an Israeli soldier who participated in the occupation of the Palestinian village of Dueima in 1948:

Killed between 80 to 100 Arabs, women and children. To kill the children they fractured their heads with sticks. There was not one house without corpses. The men and women of the villages were pushed into houses without food or water. Then the saboteurs came to dynamite the houses. One commander ordered a soldier to bring two women into a house he was about to blow up . . . Another soldier prided himself upon having raped an Arab woman before shooting her to death. Another Arab woman with her newborn baby was made to clean the place for a couple of days, and then they shot her and the baby. Educated and well-mannered commanders who were considered 'good guys' . . . became base murderers, and this not in the storm of battle, but as a method of expulsion and extermination. The fewer the Arabs who remain, the better.⁵²

In fact, in the January 8, 2004 interview he gave to *Haaretz* magazine about the updated edition of his book, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, Benny Morris said: "What the new material shows is that there were far more Israeli acts of massacre than I had previously thought. To my surprise, there were also many cases of rape . . . They are just the tip of the iceberg."

"That can't be accidental." Morris affirmed, "It's a pattern. Apparently, various officers who took part in the operation understood that the expulsion order they received permitted them to do these deeds in order to encourage the population to take to the roads. The fact is that no one was punished for these acts of murder. Ben-Gurion silenced the matter. He covered up for the officers who did the massacres."

The pattern was set and followed as Israeli historian Aryeh Yitzhaki, author of a 1,200-page history of the war, put it: "the battle followed the familiar pattern of the occupation of an Arab village . . . the method adopted being to raid an enemy village and blow up as many houses as possible in it. In the course of these operations many old people, women and children were killed whenever there was resistance. In this connection I can mention several operations of this kind carried out by Pa'el's comrades in arms-the *Palmach* irregulars who were trained to be concerned for the 'purity of Hebrew arms'."⁵³

On April 12, the Haganah took its machine of terror to the village of Khirbet Nasir ad Din and, according to an Israeli account, "atrocities were apparently committed, and the villagers fled to Arab Tiberias". Four days later, on April 16, the Haganah attacked Arab Tiberias with the apparent tacit support of the British forces of occupation, which

refused to intervene. “The British imposed a curfew”, wrote an Israeli historian, “and the Arab population was trucked out to Jordan and Nazareth. The Jews looted the abandoned quarter.”⁵⁴

The Zionists viewed truces during their war with the Palestinians as temporary respites to be violated as soon as their positions had improved. On April 14, while Palestinian–Zionist truce negotiations were in progress under the auspices of British authorities, Major R. D. Wilson reported: “the Jews launched a heavy attack which, after four days, resulted in the defeat and complete evacuation of the Arab population”.⁵⁵

British complicity with the Zionists was more evident during the Zionist onslaught against Haifa, which took place on April 21: “On the night of April 20–21, the British units deployed along the seam between the Arab and Jewish neighbourhoods were abruptly pulled out, and Jewish and Arab militiamen fought for control of the dominant positions . . . Arab resistance gradually evaporated, and civilian morale broke, most of the population fleeing. Repeated pleas by Arab leaders for reinforcements from outside the city went unanswered; at one point British troops turned back a column that tried to reach the city from the village of Tira, to the south . . .”⁵⁶

“Within a week”, recorded Major Wilson, “of their defeat at the hands of the Jews there were only 8–10,000 Arabs left in Haifa out of a normal population of some 50,000, and later that number was further reduced.”⁵⁷ Israeli historian Morris estimated that “all but three or four thousand of the Arabs left, and the town came completely under Jewish control”.⁵⁸

On April 25, the Irgun mounted an assault on Jaffa that was characterized by a constant hail of three-inch mortar bombs that lasted for seventy-two hours, creating panic and driving the terrified Palestinian Arab inhabitants out of their town. The Irgun leadership, once more, prided itself on spearheading the strategy of conquest and terror to drive the Palestinians out of their towns and villages. Menachem Begin candidly admitted that his paramilitary organization had been attacking the ‘Arab area’ of Palestine “months” before the “Arab ‘invasion’”: “In the months preceding the Arab invasion, we continued to make sallies into the Arab area. In the early days of 1948, we were explaining to our officers and men, however, that this was not enough.” Begin frankly states in his memoir that they decided by the end of January on a “strategy of conquest” because, as he admitted: “our hope lay in gaining control

of territories. At the end of January 1948, at a meeting of the Command of the Irgun in which the Planning Section participated we outlined four strategic objectives: (1) Jerusalem, (2) Jaffa, (3) the Lydda-Ramleh Plain; and (4) The Triangle (the towns of Nablus, Jenin and Tulkarm), comprising the bulk of the non-desert area west of Jordan. The first step in carrying out this plan came in April 1948 when the Haganah attacked the international city of Jerusalem.”⁵⁹

In April 25–28, 1948, the Irgun launched their attack on the Arab city of Jaffa, allotted by the United Nations to the Arab State. They bombed it mercilessly for three days until they drove the panicky inhabitants out of their homes and city. Menachem Begin proudly explained how they drove the Palestinians into the sea: “The enemy was pressed back to the sea, north and south.”⁶⁰

The expulsion gained momentum as the Haganah offensive against neighbouring Arab villages east of Jaffa intensified on April 27 and 28. As an Israeli account concluded: “By the time the remaining city notables surrendered to the Haganah, on May 13, only four or five thousand of the eighty thousand inhabitants remained.”⁶¹

In line with Plan D, the Haganah mounted a series of rapid offensives for the conquest of a series of Arab villages under Operation Yiftah and Operation Ben-Ami, the latter consisting of sub-operations including one code-named Broom which, according to Palmach commander Yigal Allon who directed Operation Yiftah, had a devastating psychological impact on the Palestinian Arabs.

Allon described with candour in *Sefer HaPalmach* (‘The Book of the Palmach’), how the Zionist forces inflicted terror and fear on the Palestinian Arabs to induce their flight from their homes and land:

There were left before us only five days, before the threatening date, the 15th of May. We saw a need to clean the inner Galilee and to create a Jewish territorial succession in the entire area of upper Galilee. The long battles had weakened our forces, and before us stood great duties of blocking the routes of the Arab invasion [literally plisha or expansion]. We therefore looked for means which did not force us into employing force, in order to cause the tens of thousands of sulky Arabs who remained in Galilee to flee . . . We tried to use a tactic which took advantage of the impression created by the fall of Safed and the [Arab] defeat in the area which was cleaned by Operation Metateh – a tactic which worked miraculously well.

I gathered all of the Jewish Mukhtars [heads of villages], who have contact with Arabs in different villages, and asked them to whisper in the ears of some Arabs that a great Jewish reinforcement has arrived in Galilee and that it was going to burn all of the villages of the Huleh. They should suggest to these Arabs, as their friends, to escape while there is still time. And the rumour spread in all the areas of the Huleh that it is time to flee. The flight numbered myriads. The tactic reached its goal completely.⁶²

Allon's psychological warfare campaign included threats to the Palestinian Arabs who did not flee before the attacking Jewish armies, that if they did not leave immediately they would be slaughtered and their daughters raped. As Benny Morris reported in his seminal work *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*, "almost all the villagers fled to Lebanon and Syria".⁶³

Other Zionist offensives complemented Operation Yiftah and "cleared the Arab villages of the Jordan and Beit Shean Valleys as well as the town of Beisan, which fell on May 13, with most of the inhabitants feeling, or being driven across the river, to Transjordan. A day or two short of the pan-Arab invasion all of eastern Galilee was in Jewish hands." Other military attacks directed against the area designated as a reduced Palestinian Arab state by the UN Partition Resolution, were carried out in order "to secure and physically incorporate in the Jewish state an area that had been designed Palestinian Arab territory in the partition resolution . . . the result was conquest, incorporation, and the clearing of the area of Arabs".⁶⁴

Similar tactics were used in Jerusalem on the day the British High Commissioner left, that is the morning of May 14th. As quoted by Levin in *Jerusalem Embattled*, Glubb Pasha reported: "The British army had held a series of massive buildings in the centre of the city, which dominated the remainder. The Haganah slipped into these buildings as the last British soldiers were preparing to leave. The plan had obviously been carefully prepared. Within an hour, the whole city was engaged in heavy fighting. Officers of the Haganah in specially prepared vans fitted with loudspeakers, drove through the streets calling out in Arabic: 'The Jericho road is still open. Fly from Jerusalem before you are killed.'"⁶⁵

Thus even before the British had evacuated Palestine and the Arab regimes finally brought themselves to intervene in Palestine on May 15, 1948, the Zionists had already largely secured control of the

area designated as a Jewish state and were on their way to complete the conquest of the rest of Palestine. As Israeli historians now admit: "Important areas assigned in the UN resolution to Palestinian or international control – including Jaffa and parts of western Jerusalem – fell under Zionist sway as hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were driven from or fled their homes. The Haganah consolidated its hold on a continuous strip of territory along the coastal plain, the Jezreel Valley, and the Jordan Valley, which it proved able to hold against combined Arab attack from without and from which it was able, eventually, to expand at the expense of additional territory earmarked for Palestinian sovereignty."⁶⁶

While some Arab leaders may have boisterously boasted about their intention to drive the Zionists into the sea, it was the Zionists who almost literally drove the Arabs into the sea. Indeed, after the fall of Haifa to the Zionist forces on April 22, 1948, the Zionist *Palestine Post* announced the following day that "Haganah forces in a thirty-hour battle . . . crushed all resistance, occupied many major buildings forcing thousands of Arabs to flee by the only open escape route – the sea."⁶⁷

NOTES

- 1 *The New York Times*, September 28, 1947.
- 2 Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), p. 31.
- 3 Michel Bar-Zohar [Peretz Kidron (trans)], *Ben-Gurion: A Political Biography* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson), vol. 2, p. 641 quoted in Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, op. cit., p. 32.
- 4 Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion*, op. cit., p. 151.
- 5 Ibid., p. 151.
- 6 Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, op. cit., pp. 72–73.
- 7 PDD, Ben-Gurion to Sharett, doc. 274, p. 46 quoted in Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, op. cit., p. 73.
- 8 Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, op. cit., p. 75.
- 9 David Ben-Gurion, *War Diaries, 1948–49*, Vol. 3 (in Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Misrad Habitachon, 1982), December 19, 1947, p. 58 quoted in Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, op. cit., p. 90.
- 10 See Major R. D. Wilson, *Cordon and Search* (Aldershot: Gales and Polden, 1949), p. 155.
- 11 Ibid., p. 156.
- 12 Ibid., p. 158.

- 13 *New Judea* (London), August-September 1937, p. 220 quoted in Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, op. cit., p. 103.
- 14 *Davar*, September 29, 1967 quoted in David Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch: The Roots of Violence in the Middle East* (London: Faber & Faber, 1977), p. 130.
- 15 Michael Adams and Christopher Mayhew, *Publish it Not: The Middle East Cover-Up* (London: Longman, 1975), p. 34.
- 16 Ben-Gurion, Minutes of the Jewish Agency Executive, June 12, 1948, Central Zionist Archives, quoted in Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, op. cit., p. 103.
- 17 (Interview by Greg Dropkin with Israeli Professor Ilan Pappé in <http://www.labournet.net/world/0209/pappe1.html>, accessed on March 6, 2006
- 18 Walid Khalidi, (ed.), *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem until 1948* (Beirut: The Institute For Palestine Studies, 1971) pp. ix-xv-ix-xvi.
- 19 Punyapriya Dasgupta, *Cheated by the World: The Palestinian Experience* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1988), p. 145.
- 20 Ben-Gurion, *War Diaries, 1948-49*, Jan 15, 1948, p. 156, quoted in Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, op. cit., p. 92.
- 21 Netanel Lorch, *The Edge of the Sword: Israel's War of Independence, 1947-49* (New York: G. P. Putman's Sons, 1961), pp. 66-67.
- 22 See John Bagot Glubb, *A Solider with the Arabs* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1957), p. 81.
- 23 Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, op. cit., p. 42.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 87.
- 25 Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion*, op. cit., p. 704 quoted in Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, op. cit., p. 42.
- 26 Lorch, *The Edge of the Sword*, op. cit., p. 84.
- 27 Netanel Lorch, *One Long War: Arab Versus Jew Since 1920* (New York: Herzl Press, 1976), p. 222.
- 28 Lorch, *Edge of the Sword*, op. cit., p. 89.
- 29 Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict: 1881-1999*, (London: John Murray, 1999), p. 206.
- 30 Baruch Kimmerling, "Benny Morris's Shocking Interview", January 26, 2004, George Mason University History News Network, <http://hnn.us/articles/3166.html>, accessed on March 6, 2006.
- 31 *Ibid.*
- 32 *Ibid.*
- 33 Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims*, op. cit., p. 206.
- 34 David Ben-Gurion, [ed. and trans. from the Hebrew under the supervision of Mordkdehai Muroct], *Rebirth and Destiny of Israel* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954), p. 239.
- 35 *Ibid.*, p. 296.
- 36 See Khalidi, "Why Did the Palestinians Leave?", *Middle East Forum*, July 1959, pp. 32-43; see also Walid Khalidi, "Plan Dalet: Master Plan for the Conquest of Palestine", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. XVIII, no. I, Autumn 1988, Issue 69, pp. 3-70. See also Lorch, *The Edge of the Sword*, op. cit., pp. 87-137.
- 37 *Sefer Hal Palmach*, vol. 2, p. 186 quoted in Khalidi, "Plan Dalet", op. cit., p. 19.

- 38 See Wilson, *Cordon and Search*, op. cit., quoted in Childers, *The Wordless Wish*, op. cit., p. 182.
- 39 Leo Heiman, in Marine Corps Gazette (June, 1964), quoted in Childers, *The Wordless Wish*, op. cit., p. 187.
- 40 Quoted in Childers, *The Wordless Wish*, in *The Transformation of Palestine*, op. cit., p. 188
- 41 Glubb, *A Solider with the Arabs*, op. cit., p. 81.
- 42 See Jon Kimche, *Seven Fallen Pillars: The Middle East, 1915–1950* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1950), pp. 217–18.
- 43 See Dominique Lapiere and Larry Collins, *O Jerusalem* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1972), p. 276, see also the account by the head of the International Red Cross Delegation in Palestine, Jacques De Reynier, *À Jérusalem un drapeau flottait sur la ligne de feu* (Neuchâtel: Éditions de la Baconnière, 1950), pp. 71–76. See also Fred J. Khouri, *The Arab–Israeli Dilemma* (Syracuse, N. Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1976) 2nd ed., pp. 123–24.
- 44 David Shipler, *New York Times*, October 22, 1979; see also J. Bowyer Bell, *Terror Out of Zion* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1977), p. 296.
- 45 Quoted in Morris, *Righteous Victims*, op. cit., p. 208.
- 46 Ibid., p. 208.
- 47 See the testimony by Meir Païl published in the Israeli paper *Yedioth Ahronoth* on April 4 and 29, 1972, cited in Elias Sanbar, *Palestine: 1948, L'expulsion* (Paris: Les livres de la Revue des études Palestiniennes, 1984), op. cit., pp. 167–68.
- 48 Kessing's Contemporary Archives, A 8019, 20–27 July, 1946.
- 49 Menachem Begin, *The Revolt* (London: W. H. Allen, 1951), quoted in F. Stone, "The Other Zionism", in *Underground to Palestine: And Reflections Thirty Years Later* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), pp. 258–59.
- 50 Aryeh Yitzhaki, *Yedioth Ahronoth*, April 14, 1972 quoted by Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, op. cit., p. 94.
- 51 Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, op. cit., p. 96.
- 52 Quoted in Livia Rokach, *Israel's Sacred Terrorism: A Study Based on Moshe Sharett's Personal Diary and Other Documents* (Belmont, MA: AAUG Press, 1986), 3rd ed., p. 5.
- 53 *Yedioth Ahronoth*, April 14, 1972 quoted in David Hirst, *Gun and Olive Branch*, op. cit., p. 140.
- 54 Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims*, op. cit., p. 210.
- 55 Wilson, *Cordon and Search*, op. cit., p. 197.
- 56 Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims*, op. cit., p. 211.
- 57 Wilson, *Cordon and Search*, op. cit., p. 194.
- 58 Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims*, op. cit., p. 211
- 59 Menachem Begin, *The Revolt* (Los Angeles: Nash Publishing, 1948, Nash edition, 1972), p. 348.
- 60 Ibid., p. 367.
- 61 Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims*, op. cit., p. 212.
- 62 *Ha Sepher Ha Palmach*, vol. 2, p. 286, quoted in Khalidi, "Plan Dalet", pp. 4–70, op. cit., p. 42.
- 63 Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–49* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 122–24.
- 64 Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims*, op. cit., p. 213.

- 65 Glubb, *A Soldier with the Arabs*, op. cit., pp. 98–99, quoted by Harry Levin, *Jerusalem Embattled: A Diary of the City Under Siege, 25 March 1948 to 18 July 1948* (London: Gollancz, 1950).
- 66 Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims*, op. cit., p. 214.
- 67 Quoted in Khalidi, “Plan Dalet”, op. cit., p. 58.

Unsuccessful Arab Intervention, the Failure of the UN and Zionist Expansionism

The Arabs: Divided, Reluctant and Unprepared

As the Zionist war of conquest raged on in Palestine, the Arab countries watched on helplessly. Unlike the Zionists, who were ready with various military plans, always keeping in mind the ultimate goal of taking all of Palestine, the Arabs had neither plans nor goals. They did not like what was happening in Palestine, but they did not know what to do about it, and mostly they were reluctant to do anything.

Because of their differences, rivalries and incompetence, the Arab regimes distinguished themselves during this crucial period only by their lack of coordination and preparation, reluctance to undertake military actions to save what was left of Palestine, blustering verbiage and exaggerated, sometimes wholly comical, assessments of their own military strength and of that of their enemy.

When Palestinian envoy Musa Alami went on a tour of Arab capitals to find out what help the Palestinians could expect from their Arab brethren, he found that Arab leaders were in as much disarray as the Palestinian leadership. Alami's first stop was Damascus: "I am happy to tell you", the Syrian President assured him, 'that our army and its equipment are of the highest order and well able to deal with a few Jews, and I can tell you in confidence that we even have an atomic bomb'; and seeing Musa's expression of incredulity, he went on, 'yes, it was made locally; we fortunately found a very clever fellow, a tinsmith.'¹

The Iraqis told Musa that all they needed was a few brooms to finish the business; the Saudis told him that they were awaiting "the green light from the British".² In early 1948, the Jordanian Prime Minister Taufiq Pasha actually went to London to seek permission from the British for an eventual Jordanian intervention in Palestine.³

Moreover, inter-Arab rivalries meant that Arab regimes could never harness the enormous potential inherent in a united approach to the

challenges facing them. King Abdullah of Transjordan “regarded the Mufti, not the Jews as his most dangerous enemy”. In one of his secret meetings with Zionist envoys, he told Zionist envoy Eliyahu Sasson: “The Mufti must be removed from the picture soon, and at any price.” For Abd al-Rahman Azzam Pasha, Secretary General of the Arab League, the Mufti was the “Menachem Begin of the Arabs”.⁴

At the same time, King Abdullah entered into secret agreements with the Zionists whose envoys he frequently met (Ezra Danin in August 1947; Golda Meir in November 1947 and again in May 1948). The agreements stipulated that Abdullah “would be allowed to control the part of Palestine intended for an Arab state and in return would not interfere with the establishment of the Jewish state”.⁵

At his May 10, 1948 meeting with Meir, Abdullah offered Meir autonomy within a bi-national state in which the Jews would be given 50% representation in a joint parliament. Meir rejected the proposal outright and warned that: “If Your Majesty has turned his back on his original understanding and wants war instead, there will be war.”⁶

Simha Flapan observed: “In fact, it was not Abdullah but Meir who demanded a radical change of the previous agreement, which had been based on secret cooperation . . . But Meir now demanded an official treaty on partition without the entry of the Arab Legion into Palestine. To accept such an ultimatum would have ruined Abdullah’s legitimacy with the Arabs overnight . . . Furthermore, he reassured her, this time as well, that the Arab Legion and the Iraqi forces would stay within Arab Palestine.”⁷

Egyptian Prime Minister Noukrashi Pasha faced a dilemma. On the one hand he recognized the strong feelings of solidarity Egyptians felt with Palestine, on the other hand, he also realized that, given the British occupation of Egypt, intervention to save Palestine was problematic. At one meeting of the Arab League, Noukrashi Pasha opposed Arab threats of intervention in Palestine.

As late as May 12, Egypt was unsure of its participation in the last-minute attempt to save the rest of Palestine. Mohammed Naguib, who would four years later lead, with Gamal Abdel Nasser, a military revolt against the Egyptian monarchy, wrote about his opposition to Egyptian intervention in Palestine: “I was opposed to a formal war in Palestine and said so at every opportunity. There was nothing to be gained and much to be lost by demonstrating our military weakness. We

would have done better in my view to confine ourselves to guerrilla operations in support of the internal Arab resistance movement . . . We might not have won the war, but at least we would not have lost it as decisively as we did. All we achieved by intervening openly in Palestine was to make it possible for the Zionists to assume the fictional but effective role of a persecuted minority fighting for its life.”⁸

However, Noukrashi Pasha finally decided that Egypt must intervene because it could not afford to be seen to be betraying Arab solidarity. He may have received encouragement from the British. In his book *Cutting the Lion's Tail: Suez Through Egyptian Eyes* Mohamed H. Heikal writes that there is evidence to suggest that the British encouraged Egyptian intervention. Egyptian involvement in Palestine would have diverted attention from the Anglo-Egyptian conflict, and would have increased the Egyptian army's dependency on Britain, thus justifying the continued British presence in Egypt.⁹

The weakness Naguib talked about was to become evident in the total lack of Arab military coordination, in the ill-trained, ill-prepared and numerically inferior troops who tried to save Palestine from an enemy infinitely better prepared, with superior numbers, equipment and training. Nasser would later tell the Americans that the pitiful shape of the Egyptian army was a powerful incentive for the overthrow of the monarchy: “The army had fought a losing battle in Palestine in 1948 with bad ammunition, ammunition that was bought at fantastic prices in Europe and that killed more Egyptian soldiers than it did of the enemy.”¹⁰

Arab Regimes Reluctantly Intervene in Palestine

Witnessing the onslaught of Jewish offensive operations against the vastly inferior Palestinian resistance and the gradual destruction of Palestinian society, Arab governments, which had opposed the suggestion of creating a Palestinian government, came under intense pressure to act.¹¹

According to Benny Morris: “Deir Yassin had a profound political and demographic effect. Despite a formal Jewish Agency Executive letter of apology and explanation to King Abdullah the incident seemed to push Jordan into the arms of those pressing for direct intervention by Arab states, and to undermine the secret Yishuv–Abdullah agreement. It may also have contributed to the decision of leaders of other nations – principally Egypt – to join the fray.”¹²

Under mounting public pressure and anger over the massacre of Deir Yassein, the fall of major Palestinian cities to Zionist forces and the massive flight of the Palestinians, “Arab chiefs of staff met for the first time to work out a plan for military intervention”.¹³ Indeed, it was not until April 30, 1948, a full six months after the Zionists had started their “aggressive defence” under Plan C for the destruction of Palestinian society, and a whole month after they launched their offensive war under Plan D for the conquest of all of Palestine, that the Arab League called a meeting of its military commanders to work out a plan of action. Even then, Arab regimes were hesitant to commit themselves to intervention and, as confirmed by another Israeli historian, Arab leaders “were still desperately searching for a face-saving formula that would extricate them from a commitment to military action”.¹⁴

As Netanel Lorch, the authoritative Israeli historian of the 1948 war, saw it, the Arab plan of action “implied a poorly veiled request to postpone invasion for an indefinite time”.¹⁵ Benny Morris recognized that: “in the Arab camp, there was no political agreement about the goals of the war; there was no unity of military command, agreed military aims, or operational procedures and timetables; and there was no political–military coordination.”¹⁶ In short, “none of the Arab armies had really prepared for war . . . Certainly there was nothing that could be considered a ‘detailed’ plan.”¹⁷

Eventually in May, Arab leaders met in Amman under the chairmanship of King Abdullah, and succeeded only in making public their disunity and animosity towards one another. Still, the pressure for Arab military action had become irresistible. The following meeting between Sir John Bagot Glubb and Arab League Secretary-General Abd al-Rahman Azzam Pasha, gives a glimpse into the tragicomical frame of mind of Arab leaders and the state of their preparedness to ‘save Palestine’.

“Two days before the mandate ended,” recounted Sir John Bagot Glubb, “the Arab League arrived in Amman with the Secretary-General Abdul Rahman Pasha Azzam . . . I was summoned to two meetings with Azzam Pasha. He asked me how many men the Arab Legion had. When I told him that we could send about 4,500, all ranks to Palestine, he expressed disappointment. He said he thought we had far more. He then asked me how many I thought the Jews had. I replied that intelligence reports had spoken of 65,000 men as having received training . . .

Azzam Pasha again expressed great surprise. He said that he had no idea there were so many. ‘However,’ he added, “I expect it will be all right. I have arranged to get up to seven hundred men from Libya.”¹⁸

At his secret meeting with Zionist envoys Golda Meir and Ezra Danin, King Abdullah said that he had been unable to prevent the Arabs from deciding on military intervention in Palestine. He said that it was still possible to prevent the expansion of the already raging war if the Zionists could agree to his plan for a bi-national state in Palestine with the Jews enjoying 50% representation in a federal parliament. The Zionists were not interested.

The Jordanian leadership had asked permission from the British to enter Palestine in order to defend the area of Palestine designated by the UN Partition Resolution even as a reduced Arab Palestinian state was already under assault by the advancing Jewish armies.

In early 1948, at a meeting in London with the Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, attended by John Bagot Glubb, Jordanian Prime Minister Taufiq Pasha requested permission from the British to send the Arab Legion “to defend the area allotted to the ‘Arab’ State” because, as he pleaded: “If this were not done, the Jews would occupy all of Palestine in a few hours . . .” Mr Bevin replied: “It seems the obvious thing to do. But do not invade the area allotted by the United Nations to the Jews.”¹⁹

By the time the Jordanian Arab Legion intervened, on May 15, the military situation on the ground as we have seen had already been more or less decided. The Zionists had taken the offensive on April 1, had virtually secured the area designated as a Jewish state, expanded its borders, and were on their way to seize the rest of Palestine.

“The main aim of Jews was to get all of Palestine”

The military realities, where the Zionists had taken the offensive against the virtually defenceless Arab Palestinian majority, had already resulted in the collapse of Palestinian resistance. The Zionists proclaimed the establishment of the State of Israel at 6 o’clock Washington time, May 14. American President Harry Truman, without consulting the State Department, granted the new state *de facto* recognition eleven minutes later. It was clear to all that there was no stopping the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, and certainly equally clear, it seemed, that there was no stopping the rapid destruction of Palestinian society, the expulsion

of its people from their homes and land, and the advances of the Jewish armies into the rest of Palestine.

Finally, on May 15, 1948, armies from Egypt, Syria and Transjordan, with token troops from Iraq, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia, entered Palestine. They attempted to salvage what was left of Palestine and prevent the Jewish armies from further expansion into the area designated as a reduced Arab Palestine. Shortly after Arab armies entered Palestine, the US Consul-General reported from Jerusalem that the Zionists had confirmed that their aim was to seize all of Palestine: "Jewish Agency spokesman when asked by American correspondent whether Jewish Agency would regard invasion of Palestine by Arab armies as releasing Agency from obligations of 29 November resolution (partitioning Palestine), replied that Ben-Gurion had always said that main aim of Jews was to get all of Palestine."²⁰

The Arabs Outnumbered, Outgunned and Outmanoeuvred

It is important to note, again contrary to the opinion dominant in Western scholarship and media, that all the Arab armies could hope to do was to stop the conquest of all of Palestine, for they were in no position to challenge the superiority of the newly established Jewish state, much less to crush it. Indeed, the Arab armies engaged the Jewish armies principally in the area designated as a reduced Palestinian state by the 1947 UN Partition Resolution. Their belated entry into Palestine, far from representing a concerted and coordinated effort to undo the newly established Jewish state, was a pathetic, ill-planned and ill-coordinated effort to stop the far superior Jewish armies from taking over all of Palestine.²¹

Sir John Bagot Glubb stated that: "The Arab Legion crossed into the 'Arab' area of Palestine on the 15th May, 1948. Far from invading Israel, it everywhere met Israeli forces invading the Arab state."²²

But the world, as Glubb Pasha pointed out, has continued to believe that the Arabs not the Israelis were the aggressors, and that the Israelis faced an overwhelming Arab force. The truth, affirmed Glubb Pasha, was that the combined forces of Egypt–Transjordan and Iraq were 17,500, while the strength of the Israeli army was 62,500.²³

Indeed, and contrary to the dominant opinion, the Arab armies were hopelessly outnumbered and outgunned. As Stephen Green discovered

in his examination of declassified American and Israeli documents: "On the one side, some 20,000 soldiers in units from the armies of Egypt, Transjordan, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon participated, though only two of these armies – the Egyptian in the Negev and the Transjordanian Arab legion in the Jerusalem area – had any sustained involvement in the fighting. On the Jewish side, thousands of tons of weapons, including planes, tanks and artillery, were mobilized and tens of millions of dollars were generated by a network that covered Europe, North and South America, North and South Africa and even China."²⁴

"Many thousands", Stephen Green discovered, "of trained soldiers and pilots with experience in the armies and air forces of both Western and East Bloc countries were also rushed into the fighting on the Jewish side", estimated by the Chiefs of the British Middle East and Palestine Commands as "a reasonably well-trained and equipped force of about 65,000 persons with a reserve of perhaps up to 40,000".²⁵

By Natanel Lorch's admission, the number of full-time Jewish soldiers increased steadily: "At the beginning of the first truce there were 49,000, including 30,000 in infantry brigades; at the end of the first truce almost 60,000; and by the middle of October on the eve of Operation Yoav there were more than 90,000 men and women."²⁶

Perhaps more significantly, as Glubb Pasha pointed out, there was a strategically significant difference between the Palestinians and the Israelis: "The difference between the two sides was that the Zionists had a well thought out plan to conquer the Arab state, while the Palestinians, as individuals or in groups, fought back without any plan, trying to save their homes."²⁷

In addition, Israel used the first armistice to clandestinely and illegally organize an airlift of weapons from Czechoslovakia and to augment the number of men under arms to 100,000. There were also a large number of foreign 'volunteers' flying its air force, the majority of whom were American pilots.²⁸ Benny Morris has provided more precise figures of the number of American and Canadian pilots who participated directly on the side of the Jewish State in the 1948 war: "More than three hundred Americans and Canadians – mostly with World War II experience – served in the IAF [Israeli Air Force] in 1948, 198 of them as air crew. The IAF had far more trained personnel than were needed, the Arabs far too few. Thus, in October 1948, flying only a dozen or so fighters, the IAF gained immediate air superiority against the Egyptians."²⁹

Israel also received important quantities of weapons shipped from France in violation of the clauses of the armistice agreement. In addition to French 'volunteers' fighting on the side of the Jewish state, the French government helped with the logistics of facilitating the airlift of weapons from Czechoslovakia to Israel.³⁰

In addition to the gross inequality of the opposing forces, there was clearly a vast qualitative and quantitative gap in the armaments of each side. The arms embargo imposed by the United States and Britain mainly hurt the Arabs, who had no alternative sources of weapon supply, but did not stop the Zionists from receiving continuous military supplies from Europe and America. Arab armies quickly suffered from severe shortages in weapons and ammunitions, while the Zionist armies continued to receive cash from European and American Jews, and a steady supply of increasingly more sophisticated weapons from Czechoslovakia and from private dealers in Europe and the United States.

As Gold Meir was raising money (in two months in the United States at this time she brought back the then incredible sum of \$50 million) other Zionist envoys were touring Europe purchasing all sorts of weapons and recruiting military experts. Zionist missions, codenamed Rekesh, had been sent to Europe shortly after the Partition Resolution was adopted in late November 1947. Czechoslovakia, as has been seen, was the major source of arms and proved particularly cooperative in selling the Zionists practically all they wanted including planes, which were dismantled, crated, and flown secretly via Corsica to secret Zionist-controlled airfields in Palestine. Other planes were also routed from Prague to Yugoslavia where they stopped for refuelling and flew to Palestine.³¹

After the communist takeover in Prague in February 1948, the Czechs became even more zealous in arming the Zionists, as Ben-Gurion's biographer recognized, and the flow of arms included heavy machine-guns and planes. All the while Britain enforced its arms embargo and refused to send arms to Egypt, Iraq and Transjordan.

In addition, the Soviet Union played a major role in facilitating the transfer to Palestine of able-bodied Jewish immigrants who had already received basic military training in communist training camps. As Punyapriya Dasgupta put it: "The Soviet Union so arranged it with the East European governments under its influence after the Second World War, that the Zionist scheme for transferring illegally the able-bodied Jews, trained in fighting, to the refugee camps in Western Europe and

then to Palestine, was considerably facilitated. The success of Operation Brichah (Flight) of the Haganah could not have been the success it was unless Moscow asked the Poles, the Romanians, the Hungarians and the Yugoslavs until Tito's excommunication, to ensure that the Zionists got what they wanted."³²

The communist bloc countries even allowed the Israelis to establish training camps on their territories. Thus, in Romania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland "Israeli representatives ran, with the help of local communists, camps for combat training for those who would soon be masquerading as people displaced in the Second World War, with no other hope of saving themselves and their Judaic faith except by going to Palestine."³³

UN Mediations Fail as the Zionist Conquest Continues

On May 20, 1948, the United Nations appointed Count Folk Bernadotte as a mediator for Palestine, and Arab governments quickly accepted Count Bernadotte's appeal for a four-week truce in fighting to facilitate his peace mission.

Count Bernadotte came to Palestine with the impeccable credentials of a Swedish aristocrat who had used his position as President of the Red Cross in Sweden to rescue thousands of Jews from Himmler in the latter stages of World War II. He came to Palestine favourably disposed towards Zionism and inclined to see the problem through Zionist eyes. He knew little about Palestine and even less about the Arabs whom he tended to regard as an exotic and traditional people.

The realities in Palestine greatly modified his preconceived ideas. After visiting refugee camps he came to appreciate the extent of the tragedy that was befalling the Arabs of the Palestine. At the same time, he could not countenance the Israeli refusal to allow these refugees to return to their homes and lands. Having concluded that the refugee problem was obviously the greatest obstacle to peace, he wrote in his progress report to the United Nations: "It would be an offence against the principles of elemental justice if these innocent victims of the conflict were denied the right to return to their homes while Jewish immigrants flow into Palestine, and, indeed, at least offer the threat of permanent replacement of the Arab refugees who have been rooted in the land for centuries."³⁴

But his arguments with the Israeli leaders were met with categorical rejections. The Zionists were carrying out 'adjustments' of the borders of the Jewish state as their forces advanced and ethnically cleansed whole areas of their Arab populations. They were not interested in proposals that would undo the fruits of their conquest and expulsion. It was quickly becoming apparent to Bernadotte that his mission was viewed with hostility by the Israelis, who were not interested in a peaceful solution on the basis of compromise but rather on a solution based on their military achievements.

UN Envoy Assassinated

Bernadotte recommended that western Galilee, promised in the Partition Resolution to the Arab state but now occupied by Zionist armies, remain within Jewish hands. In return, the Swedish diplomat recommended that the Negev desert, originally promised to the Zionists in the Jewish state but now under the control of the Egyptian army and mostly inhabited by Arabs, should remain in the hands of the Arabs. President Truman reluctantly agreed with his State Department's suggestion that the United States should support this recommendation at the United Nations Security Council.³⁵

Bernadotte also recommended that the future Arab state be joined to Transjordan, and insisted that all the Palestinian refugees be allowed by Israel to return to their homes. He urged the Security Council to ensure that the return of the Palestinian refugees take place "at the earliest practicable date" even if it meant before the conclusion of formal peace between Israel and its neighbours.³⁶

Zionist leaders accepted the parts of the plan favourable to them and rejected what was unfavourable. They liked the idea of keeping western Galilee but refused the trade-off and insisted that they wanted the Negev as well.

As a result, Moshe Sharett, Israel's first Foreign Minister, adopted the peculiar position at the United Nations of claiming the Negev in the name of the Partition Resolution but refusing to give up western Galilee, which Israel had occupied by force, in violation of the same Partition Resolution.

The truth is that the Israeli leaders had really never welcomed Bernadotte's mission, lest he discovered realities incompatible with the

pro-Zionist propaganda dominant in the West. The objectivity, realism and sense of justice that Bernadotte brought to his mission led him to make recommendations incompatible with Zionist plans. These recommendations carried weight since they were made under the auspices of the United Nations, the organization responsible for giving the Zionists a juridical basis for the establishment of Israel. In addition, both Great Britain and the United States supported Bernadotte's proposals. This made Bernadotte an enemy in the eyes of the Zionists. On September 17, 1948, as his motorcade drove through Jerusalem, assassins from the Stern Gang ambushed and murdered Count Folke Bernadotte.

Simha Flapan explained how revisionist Zionist paramilitary organizations, such as the Irgun and the Stern Gang, used violence, terror and assassinations to foil all attempts at accommodation with the Palestinian Arabs, and thus advance the use of force and brutality as the only means to achieve the goal of wresting Palestine from its inhabitants: "The Irgun (led by Begin) and the LEHI (the Stern Gang, led by Shamir) were the military outgrowths of the Revisionist party of Jabotinsky," he explained, "whose aim was to secure the whole of Palestine for the Jews. The exacerbation of Arab-Jewish relations was an integral part of their policy, and throughout the 1920s and 1930s, their planned provocations and indiscriminate bombings succeeded in raising national tensions",³⁷ and, one might add, reduced the chances of any possible accommodation between Zionists and Arabs.

Conquest, Terror and Expulsions Continue

The Zionists saw no need to modify their strategies. Just as they did with the first armistice, the Zionists violated the second armistice with major offensives against Egypt in the south and in the Galilee in the north. As Foreign Minister Sharett was meeting, in October 1948, with the Chairman of the Egyptian Senate Mohammad Hussein Heikal, in Geneva to explore Egyptian peace offers, Ben-Gurion ordered the Israeli army to violate the truce and launch 'Operation Ten Plagues' against Egyptian forces in the Negev. This violation came despite stern warnings from acting UN mediator Ralph Bunch that "a resumption of hostilities would certainly mean intervention of great powers".³⁸

A report prepared by the military intelligence and information service Shai of the main Israeli military organization the Haganah, and

dated June 30, 1948, affirmed that: “70 percent of the refugees had abandoned their homes at the time of the first wave [up till 1 June 1948] because of hostile acts committed by the Haganah, Irgun, and the Stern group.”³⁹

Israeli writer Amnon Kapeliouk added that “this first wave involved some 400,000 people. The second wave, of some 300,000, set out for exile between June and December of 1948. It was thus that a number of cities and about 250 villages were emptied of their inhabitants. The two main reasons for the Palestinian exodus of 1948 were expulsion by the Israeli army and fear of massacre. As for the expulsion carried out in 1949, involving another several thousand, and those of 1950 [the inhabitants of the cities of Majdal, in the south], they were organized and implemented by the military governors who had already been installed in the region by that time.”⁴⁰

Furthermore, a serving officer of the Israeli Army Engineering Corps related to Irish writer Erskine B. Childer a typical incident. The Israeli officer gave an eyewitness account of what happened after the Egyptians, encircled in the Falouja pocket in Palestine, surrendered and the town was taken by the Israeli forces: “The Arab inhabitants were asked whether they wished to stay or leave. They said they would stay. Thereupon, several of their houses were dynamited, and they were warned that the main Israeli force coming would treat them much more roughly. The Arabs then ‘changed their mind,’ and were transported out of the area to Transjordan.”⁴¹

If the Palestinian Arabs could not be intimidated into ‘changing their minds’, or if the occasional massacre did not induce sufficient panic to cause massive flight, houses were demolished and people were forcibly expelled. On July 12, 1948, the Zionist forces attacked the Palestinian towns of Lydda and Ramle, and according to one Israeli account, began “massacring young men detained in the mosque compound, and shooting indiscriminately into houses. According to Palmach records cited by Benny Morris, ‘at least 250’ of the townspeople died”. With Ben-Gurion’s authorization, the Zionist army “expelled the inhabitants of Lydda and Ramle and drove them toward the Legion lines to the east. By the evening of July 13, the two towns had been completely emptied.”⁴²

The assassination of Bernadotte, designed precisely to foreclose the possibility of a negotiated settlement with the Arabs, derailed the possibility of a UN-sanctioned settlement. This suited Ben-Gurion’s

expansionist plans. On September 26, 1948, he proposed to the provisional government of Israel that the Zionist forces attack the West Bank.⁴³

Ben-Gurion recorded the plan of the attack in his diary: the Jewish forces would take “Bethlehem and Hebron, where there are about a hundred thousand Arabs. I assume that most of the Arabs of Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Hebron would flee, like the Arabs of Lydda, Jaffa, Tiberias and Safad, and we will control the whole breadth of the country up to the Jordan.”⁴⁴

In another entry Ben-Gurion wrote: “It is not impossible . . . that we will be able to conquer the way to the Negev, Eilat and the Dead Sea and to secure the Negev for ourselves; also to broaden the corridor to Jerusalem from north and south; to liberate the rest of Jerusalem and to take the Old City; to seize all of central and western Galilee *and to expand the borders of the state in all directions.*”⁴⁵ The Zionist leaders were trying once more to create *faits accomplis*, which would make the Bernadotte proposals irrelevant.

On September 21, US Secretary of State George Marshall, attending the United Nations in Paris, had issued a statement confirming that the United States accepted the Bernadotte plan. Particularly objectionable to the Zionists were the plan’s call for the return of the Palestinian refugees and the fact that they would only be able to keep Arab Galilee if they did not claim the Negev.

But the Israelis were determined to block both provisions: they opposed the return of Palestinian refugees and wanted to have both Galilee and the Negev desert. The American Zionists responded swiftly by attacking the statement as being contrary to the Democratic party’s policy. They also mobilized, once more, Eddie Jacobson, Truman’s former business partner and long-time friend. Jacobson argued with Truman that as the elections approached, it was imperative not to let the State Department make him lose the Jewish vote in New York. As a result Truman ordered that the Marshall statement be completely disavowed. In the end, it was not, but there was no concrete American support for the Bernadotte plan, which was thus allowed to be overtaken by the military conquests the Zionists in Israel were preparing.

The United States had helped draft General Assembly Resolution 194 of December 11, 1948 which provided that “the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live in peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date and that compensation

should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return". The Resolution also called for a United Nations administration for Jerusalem. Israeli leaders simply ignored the Resolution and proceeded to plan for more military conquests.

And by January 1949, as armistice negotiations were being conducted in Rhodes under United Nations' auspices, the Israelis were shooting Royal Air Force aircraft over Egyptian territories south of Rafah as a prelude to conquering the entire Gaza coastal region. Only strong American warnings of the possibilities of British military intervention convinced Ben-Gurion to stop his expansionist plans, for the time being.⁴⁶

Expansion Rather than Peace

Israel had been established and in the process Zionist leaders managed to foil the establishment of the reduced Arab Palestinian state. As Simha Flapan candidly admitted: "it cannot be concluded from this chain of events that the non-establishment of a Palestinian state was due to the Palestinians' own fanaticism, extremism and belligerence. To draw such a conclusion, as many analysts have done, is to ignore an essential part of Israel's strategy: the elimination of the Palestinian people as contenders for, and even as inhabitants of, the same territory, and the denial of their right to an independent state. These objectives took precedence over peace. As it turned out, their attainment actually made peace impossible."⁴⁷

The Zionists' grand design called for expulsion and expansion. On the eve of the creation of the state of Israel, on May 14, 1948, Ben-Gurion, future first Prime Minister of the new state, deliberately refused to delineate the borders of Israel. With an eye to future expansion beyond the borders of the UN Partition Plan he argued with the Zionist executive that the creation of the state of Israel did not have to include the precise borders of the Jewish state.

When Penhas Rosen, future Minister of Justice, told Ben-Gurion that the question of borders could not be ignored, Ben-Gurion replied: "Everything is possible. If we [the provisional government of Israel] decide here that the borders are not to be mentioned, that is how it will be."⁴⁸ The real reason for not mentioning the borders was of course the expansionist ambitions of the Zionist leaders who looked forward to constant shifting of the borders at the expense of the Arabs. "To the

extent that the Jews manage to turn wasteland into settled country,” said Ben-Gurion, “the border will shift.”⁴⁹

The aim of wrestling all of Palestine has been publicly stated on many an occasion. At one point during the futile UN mediation efforts, Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett hinted that a possible solution to the whole problem would be for all of Palestine to belong to the Jews.⁵⁰ This was unlikely to be achieved with the sanction of the United Nations, and the Zionists knew it. The Zionists’ preferred strategy, as documented above, was to rely on their own military force to achieve the conquest of all of Palestine. As the American Counsel-General in Jerusalem reported to the State Department in May 1948, quoting the answer of an official of the Jewish Agency: “Ben-Gurion had always said that main aim of Jews was to get all of Palestine.”⁵¹

While the UN had served the useful purpose of providing a juridical cover to the establishment of Israel in half of Palestine, the UN’s insistence on the return of the Palestinian refugees to their homes in what had now become Israel, was viewed by the Zionists as tantamount to defeating the very purpose of establishing a Jewish state. In short, the Israeli leaders viewed with suspicion and hostility the UN’s mediation efforts and meddling in Palestine. Their obstructionist attitude toward the UN Observers had led Bernadotte to complain to the Israeli Foreign Minister that “the Arabs had given the Observers every possible help, particularly during the second truce, while the Israelis had tried to put spokes in the wheels and did everything in their power to make the Observers’ work more difficult”.⁵²

Arab Peace Overtures Rebuffed

It was almost inevitable that the peace overtures made by Arab governments, and there were several, contrary to the popular assertions dominant in the West of relentless Arab hostility, would elicit no interest from a Zionist leadership confident of its ability to impose better terms by the use of force.

For instance, Bernadotte told the American chargé d’affaires in Egypt that the Secretary-General of the Arab League was ready to accept Israel’s existence. But the Israeli leaders were not interested. Neither Arab peace offers nor UN mediations efforts made sense in the face of a victorious army able to implement a long cherished conquest plan for Palestine.

“Even during the war,” reported Flapan, “Egyptian representatives maintained contact with Israel and submitted proposals for a peaceful settlement of the conflict.”⁵³

In January 1949, the Syrians had also made direct peace offers to the Israelis. Colonel Husni al-Zaim offered to meet with Ben-Gurion to negotiate a fully-fledged peace treaty and also offered to absorb 300,000 Palestinian refugees in Syria. The Syrian proposals were enthusiastically supported by the United States, but, according to Flapan: “Israel refused to take up his offer because Ben-Gurion was determined to impose armistice treaties by force of military might rather than agreement.”⁵⁴ Israeli researcher Avi Shlaim concluded: “During his brief tenure of power [Zaim] gave Israel every opportunity to bury the hatchet and lay the foundations for peaceful co-existence in the long term. If his overtures were spurned, if his constructive proposals were not put to the test, and if a historic opportunity was fritted away . . . the fault must be sought not with Zaim but on the Israeli side.”⁵⁵

Even King Abdullah, who had showed the most eagerness to reach accommodations with the Zionists, was eventually double-crossed by his Zionist allies. His secret dealings with the Zionist leaders, and subsequent eagerness for peace with Israel, did not save him from the harsh realities and consequences of the Zionists’ determination to pursue a policy of expansion.

Abdullah had told Zionist envoys Moshe Dayan and Eliyahu Sasson, whom he received at his palace on January 30, 1949, that he wanted to negotiate a peace treaty with Israel directly, not through the United Nations, and openly, not secretly. He informed them that he had the support of Iraq on this matter.

But the Israelis were in no hurry. They waited until they had signed the armistice treaty with Egypt, on February 28, 1949, before suddenly, and shockingly for King Abdullah, radically changing their position. “Once the armistice treaty with Egypt was signed,” observed Flapan, “Israel’s dealings with Abdullah changed completely. The negotiators with Transjordan were instructed to be uncompromising: to demand radical changes in the Triangle, evacuation of the Arab Legion from the whole Negev . . . and to refuse to recognize Transjordan’s sovereignty over the West Bank.”⁵⁶

Abdullah was shocked but helpless. The Israelis did not even give him a chance to think about their ultimatum. On March 5, and in total

violation of the armistice agreement, Ben-Gurion sent his army to conquer and secure a seashore in the south with direct access to the Red Sea. In vain, Abdullah appealed to Israel and the United Nations for a ceasefire. Faced with the prospect of certain defeat by an Israeli army that “outnumbered the [Arab] Legion by ten to one,”⁵⁷ Abdullah was ultimately forced to withdraw his Arab Legion, which was blocking the way to the Gulf of Aqaba. The Israelis swept away the people and obliterated the Arab village of Um Rashrash that existed opposite to Transjordan’s Aqaba and established the port of Eilat.

As Ben-Gurion’s biographer recognized, when the armistice agreement was signed with Egypt at the end of February, Ben-Gurion “launched Operation *Fait Accompli*, aimed at occupying the whole of the Negev. The code name had the stamp of Ben-Gurion. On March 10, after a lightning dash across the desert, Israeli forces entered Eilat . . . The Jordanians had withdrawn before the Jewish advance . . . Israel had won the war, had obtained all the territories conquered by her army – Galilee, the Negev and part of Jerusalem. Ben Gurion’s *faits accomplis* had prevailed over United Nations’ resolutions.”⁵⁸

In the peace negotiations that followed, the Israelis proved once more uncompromising and Abdullah’s isolation was complete. In a prophetic statement, he told a member of the Palestine Conciliation Commission: “I know that my time is limited . . . and that my people distrust me because of my peace efforts [and] because they suspect [me] of wanting to make peace without any concessions from Israel.”⁵⁹ Less than a month later, in July 1951, he was assassinated by a Palestinian nationalist.

No Withdrawal from Conquered Land, and No Return of Palestinian Refugees

Israel adamantly refused to withdraw from the territories its armies occupied over and above the area recommended as a Jewish state by the UN Partition Plan. When armistices were finally signed with Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon, Israel stood in control of and had annexed half of the territories provided as a reduced Palestinian state in the UN Partition Resolution. Jordan and Egypt occupied the remainder, the West Bank and Gaza respectively, in possible application of a tacit agreement between the pro-Western Jordanian King Abdullah and Egyptian King Farouk, not to allow the creation of a Palestinian state.⁶⁰

All Zionist leaders agreed that they would not permit the return of the Palestinian refugees to their homes and lands. Ben-Gurion was adamant on the question of Palestinian refugees. He told a meeting of the provisional government of Israel in June 1948: "I don't accept the formulation that we should not encourage their return: Their return must be prevented . . . at all costs."⁶¹

With regard to Jerusalem, the Israeli leadership considered it Israel's capital and refused to countenance any talk of internationalization. On the other hand, the United States and Britain issued a joint statement refusing to recognize Israeli sovereignty over West Jerusalem and insisting that all business would be conducted in Tel Aviv. East Jerusalem and the West Bank would later be annexed by Transjordan, and Gaza administered by Egypt.

With regard to the refugees, the Truman administration stated its support for the December 11 Resolution 194 and sponsored the UN resolution setting up the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees. Truman recommended to Congress that it pay half the cost of the relief programme which he hoped would be of a temporary nature, pending the definitive settlement of the refugee problem along the lines of the December 11 Resolution.

But the State Department's man in charge of the Palestinian refugee question, George McGhee, quickly reached pessimistic conclusions. On March 15, 1949 he had determined that most of the Palestinian refugees wished to return to their homes but that this was increasingly becoming an unrealistic expectation because "Israeli authorities have followed a systematic program of destroying Arab houses in such cities as Haifa and in village communities in order to rebuild modern habitations for the influx of Jewish immigrants from Displaced Persons camps in Europe. There are thus in many instances, literally no houses for the refugees to return to." He therefore recommended that Israel repatriate only a small number with the majority of refugees settling in Arab Palestine and in other Arab states.⁶²

A week later, Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett came to Washington. With Truman's approval, new Secretary of State Dean Acheson pressed Sharett to allow a quarter of the refugees to go back to their homes, particularly in the Arab areas which had been intended for Arab Palestine and which had been conquered by the Israelis. Sharett was intransigent and refused to allow the refugees back. Truman himself

was unable to get any cooperation on the question of refugees from Weizmann during the latter's visit to Washington. In despair, Truman wrote a letter to the Israeli government threatening a revision of American policy towards Israel. Zionist leaders were not impressed and they countered by threatening an intensive counter-attack from their lobbyists and friends in the United States.

After some mild threats that the \$49 million loan from the Export-Import Bank of the United States approved for Israel might be delayed, the Israelis said they might be willing to allow the return of around 100,000 refugees. This fell far short of the large-scale repatriation scheme the administration had in mind. But no effective sanctions or even serious pressure seemed to be forthcoming.

The American public was largely ignorant of the plight of the Palestinian refugees. This ignorance and indifference extended to American Congressmen, who were generally subjected a barrage of pro-Zionist propaganda and little or no information whatsoever about the Palestinian or Arab cause. One example will suffice to measure the impact of this imbalance on American lawmakers. After an official visit to Beirut in 1953, a Californian Congressman had become aware of the existence and the plight of the Palestinian refugees. He wrote to the State Department in astonishment and dismay that within the territories recommended by the United Nations in 1947 for the establishment of a Jewish State "there must have been some Moslems".⁶³

NOTES

- 1 Geoffrey Furlonge, *Palestine is my Country; The Story of Musa Alami* (London: John Murray, 1969), p. 152.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Sir John Baggot Glubb, *Peace in the Holy Land* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1971), p. 301.
- 4 Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), p. 130.
- 5 Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, op. cit., p. 136.
- 6 Ibid., p. 141.
- 7 Ibid., p. 141.
- 8 Mohammed Naguib, *Egypt's Destiny: A Personal Statement* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1955), p. 17.

- 9 See Mohamed H. Heikal, *Cutting The Lion's Tail: Suez Through Egyptian Eyes* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1986), p. 16.
- 10 Mohamed Hassanein Heikal, *The Cairo Documents* (New York: Doubleday, 1973), p. 36.
- 11 See Elias Sanbar, *Palestine 1948 L'expulsion* (Paris: Les livres de la Revue des études Palestiniennes, 1984), p. 150.
- 12 Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict: 1881-1999* (London: John Murray, 1999), p. 209.
- 13 Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, op. cit., p. 132.
- 14 Ibid., p. 133.
- 15 Netanel Lorch, *The Edge of the Sword: Israel's War of Independence, 1947-49* (New York: G. P. Putman's Sons), p. 142.
- 16 Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims*, op. cit., p. 219.
- 17 Ibid., pp. 219-20.
- 18 Sir John Bagot Glubb, *A Soldier with the Arabs*, op. cit., p. 84.
- 19 Sir John Bagot Glubb, *Peace in the Holy Land*, op. cit., p. 301.
- 20 Stephen Green, *Taking Sides: America's Secret Relations with a Militant Israel* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1984), p. 71.
- 21 See Marian Woolfson, "Tricks the Memory Plays on Palestine", *Manchester Guardian Weekly* (England), April 6, 1986. See also Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, op. cit.
- 22 Sir John Bagot Glubb, *Peace in the Holy Land*, op. cit., p. 301.
- 23 Ibid., p. 307.
- 24 Stephen Green, *Taking Sides*, op. cit., p. 47.
- 25 Stephen Green, *Taking Sides*, op. cit., p. 67. See also Jon and David Kimche, *Both Sides of the Hill: Britain and the Palestine War* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1960); John Bagot Glubb, *A Soldier with the Arabs* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1959), 4th ed. and W. Khalidi (ed.), *From Haven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem until 1948* (Beirut: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 1971).
- 26 Lorch, *The Edge of the Sword*, op. cit., p. 324.
- 27 Glubb, *Peace in the Holy Land*, op. cit., p. 301.
- 28 Stephen Green, *Taking Sides*, op. cit., p. 17.
- 29 Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims*, op. cit., p. 218.
- 30 See Michel Bar-Zohar, *Suez: Ultra-Secret* (Paris: Fayard, 1964), p. 36.
- 31 See Arnold Krammer, "Arms for Independence: When the Soviet Bloc Supported Israel", in Khalidi, *From Haven to Conquest*, op. cit., pp. 745-54.
- 32 Punyapriya Dasgupta, *Cheated by the World* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1988), pp. 122-23.
- 33 Ibid., pp. 122-23.
- 34 Count Folk Bernadotte, Progress Report of the UN Mediator on Palestine, General Assembly, Official Records, Third Session, Supplement No. II (A/648) Paris, September 16, 1948, p. 14.
- 35 George Lenczowski, *American Presidents and the Middle East* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), p. 27.
- 36 Progress Report, op. cit., p. 13, quoted in Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch: The Roots of Violence in the Middle East* (London: Faber and Faber, 1977), p. 152.

- 37 Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, op. cit., p. 67.
- 38 Ibid., p. 208.
- 39 See Amnon Kapeliouk, "New Lights on the Israeli-Arab Conflict and the Refugee Problem and its Origins", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. XVI, no. 3. (Spring 1987), p. 21.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Erskine Childers, *The Wordless Wish*, op. cit., p. 195.
- 42 Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims*, op. cit., p. 240.
- 43 Ben-Gurion, *War Diaries, 1948-49*, p. 722, no. 8 and p. 726 quoted in Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, op. cit., p. 48.
- 44 Quoted in ibid, p. 48.
- 45 Quoted in ibid, p. 48, emphasis added.
- 46 T. G. Fraser, *The USA and the Middle East Since World War II* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1989), p. 53.
- 47 Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, p. 49.
- 48 See Tom Segev, *1949: The First Israelis* (New York: The Free Press, 1986), p. xviii.
- 49 Shabatai Teveth, *Ben-Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs* (New York, 1985) quoted in ibid.
- 50 Folk Bernadotte [trans. from the Swedish by Joan Bulman], *To Jerusalem* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1951), p. 210.
- 51 Stephen Green, *Taking Sides*, op. cit., p. 71.
- 52 Folk Bernadotte, *To Jerusalem*, op. cit., p. 208.
- 53 Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, op. cit., p. 152.
- 54 Ibid., p. 211.
- 55 Avi Shlaim, "Husni Zaim and the Plan to Resettle Palestinian Refugees in Syria," unpublished paper submitted to the Refugee Documentation Project, York University, Toronto, 1984 quoted in Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, op. cit., p. 211.
- 56 Ibid., p. 147.
- 57 Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, op. cit., p. 148.
- 58 Michel Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion: The Armed Prophet* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1968), p. 155.
- 59 Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, op. cit., pp. 149-150.
- 60 See Samir Amin, *The Arab Nation: Nationalism and Class Struggles* (London: Zed Press, 1978).
- 61 Ben-Gurion, *War Diaries, 1948-49*, speech at meeting of provisional government, June 16, 1948, p. 525 quoted in Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, op. cit., p. 105.
- 62 Memorandum by McGhee, March 15, 1989, *Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers 1949*, vol. VI, pp. 827-43.
- 63 Quoted in T. G. Fraser, *The USA and the Middle East*, op. cit., p. 59.

Palestine Conquered and Transformed: Myths and Realities

Jewish military conquests and control of Arab villages not designated for inclusion in the Jewish state under the Partition Resolution brought more of the Arab population under Jewish control. This further complicated the task for the Zionist leadership who were determined to establish a state in which the Jews were the unchallenged majority. “In internal discussions and in instructions to his people”, wrote Ben-Gurion’s biographer, “the ‘old man’ demonstrated a clear stand: it was better that the smallest possible number of Arabs remain within the area of the state.”¹

The Zionist drive to expel or to terrorize into flight the Arab population of Palestine proved remarkably successful. By the end of the war, in 1949, there were about 900,000 Palestinian refugees. When it became clear that these homeless Palestinians were going to represent a major problem, the Israeli leadership fabricated a myth in 1951 to try to explain away their own responsibility for the plight of the Palestinians, and justify somewhat the Israeli refusal to allow these Palestinians to return to their homes and land.

Israel claimed that the Palestinian refugees were not expelled but that they had ‘left’ in response to calls from Arab leaders who allegedly (and preposterously) invited them to leave to make room for the invading Arab armies. Although on the face of it the claim seems utterly ridiculous, as a propaganda play it worked, thanks to the willingness of Western, and particularly American supporters, of Israel to believe Israeli-based information, and also thanks to the ineptitude of the Arab governments’ information effort.

Israel’s many supporters in the Western media and ruling circles willingly propagated the fabrication. It served to project the blame onto the Arabs, absolve Israel from responsibility and justify its adamant refusal

to implement UN resolutions demanding the return of the refugees to their homes and land.

Erskine B. Childers investigated the Israeli allegations of Arab orders to the Palestinians to flee their country as early as 1958. He went back to the sources of quotations taken out of context and found that a study of the full and original text revealed that the Israeli 'evidence' was constructed in such a way that it was "diametrically opposite the plain meaning" of the original text. Childers also contacted the Greek-Catholic archbishop of Galilee whose statement was reproduced in a small Lebanese journal (*Sada al-Janub*, August 16, 1948) and widely used by Israeli officials to successfully influence Western and American public opinion. Childers found the archbishop in Israel in 1958 and asked him for "whatever primary and documentary evidence His Grace could provide" for the official Arab evacuation orders which he was so widely quoted as confirming. The archbishop's reply, on official archbishopric letterhead from Haifa, dated December 4, 1958, was as follows:

"There is nothing in this statement to justify the construction which many propagandists had put on it." The archbishop went on to affirm, "The truth is that the (Palestinian) flight was primarily due to the terror with which the Arab population of Palestine were struck in consequence of atrocities committed by Jews, ie the Deir Yassin massacre, the brutal throwing of bombs at a large group of innocent Arab workmen assembled at the outer gates of the Refineries near Haifa, the dastardly night attack on Balad Al-Sheik village in the vicinity of Haifa and other similar onslaughts. These brutalities were the cause of the flight of the inhabitants of Haifa, Jaffa and Jerusalem."²

Childers also examined the complete daily BBC broadcast monitoring records of all radio transmissions in and around Palestine in 1948, which are to be found at the British Museum in London. He concluded that: "The official Palestine Arab leadership repeatedly exhorted the people, by radio, by leaflet and through the local committees, to stay in their homes and not listen to panic-mongers; and it issued orders in March" to stop the limited exodus of Palestinians who were leaving the country.

Childers also found evidence to demolish Zionist propaganda that the Zionist leadership appealed to the Arabs to stay and not flee: "Monitoring records of Zionist radio broadcasts in the period show repeated psychological warfare designed to break Arab confidence in

their own leadership, to spread panic about imminent dangers of epidemic diseases, and to relay stories of terrified Arab communities. At the same time, both Haganah and Palmach units – the ‘official’ Zionist military units – were engaged in palpable and unacknowledged intimidatory raids on Arab villages, significantly including raids announced as reprisals for Arab violent reactions to ‘*unofficial*’ [Stern Gang and Irgun] Zionist attacks on civilian Arabs.”³

Childers’ findings were confirmed by Palestinian scholar Walid Khalidi’s separate and independent findings. Khalidi examined separate CIA monitoring records at Princeton University in the United States and reached similar conclusions to those of Childers.

Khalidi wrote: “I can now report that the complete CIA collection here in Princeton also overwhelmingly confirms and elaborates the results that Mr Childers and I have arrived at independently of one another. Briefly, these are the following: (1) There are countless broadcasts by Zionist radios which indicate deliberate psychological warfare against the Arabs. (2) There is not one single instance of an Arab evacuation order or a hint of such an order. (3) There is an impressive stream of explicit Arab orders to the Palestinian Arab civilians to hold their ground and remain in their towns and villages. (4) A similar stream between March and May announces plans for the setting up of Palestinian administration and urges Arab civil servants to stay at their posts. (5) Many Zionist broadcasts repeat and comment on the Arab announcements, referred to in (3) and (4). (6) Even at the darkest of times Arab broadcasts consistently belittled Zionist atrocities.”⁴

It is interesting to note in this regard that Albert Hyamson, former British Director of Immigration to Palestine under the Mandate, writing in 1950 casually referred to Israeli expulsion of Palestinians as he was explaining how the Jews became a majority in Palestine: “Among the citizens of Israel, Jews (by religion) at the time of writing (1950) *as a consequence of the expulsion of most of the Arab population*, predominate.”⁵

In reply to the version of events presented by the Israeli government and its supporters in the Western media about Palestinian exodus, Nathan Chofshi, one of the early Jewish pioneers in Palestine, wrote: “If Rabbi Kaplan really wanted to know what happened, we Jewish settlers in Palestine, who witnessed the flight, could tell him how and in what manner we Jews forced the Arabs to leave cities and villages . . . Some of them were driven out by force of arms; others were made to leave by

deceit, lying and false promises. It is enough to cite the cities of Jaffa, Lydda, Ramle, Beersheba, Acre from among numberless others. We came and turned the native Arabs into tragic refugees. And still we dare to slander and malign them, to besmirch their name. Instead of being deeply ashamed of what we did and trying to undo some of the evil we committed . . . we justify our terrible acts and even try to glorify them.”⁶

Walid Khalidi documented as early as 1959 the unreliability of the Israeli-derived material promoted in the West as the facts about the crucial events of 1947–48, particularly with regard to the Palestinian exodus and the Israeli master plan for launching offensive operations against the Palestinian towns and villages which had not fallen into the area recommended as the future Jewish state by the UN Partition Resolution.⁷

Confirming the Reality of Palestinian Expulsion

Significantly, the truth has now been admitted by many Zionist and Israeli historians. Natanel Lorch relates in his book *The Edge of the Sword* the Zionist terror campaign to drive the Palestinians out of their homes: “It was a sophisticated combination of physical and psychological blitz, mounted by official and ‘dissident’ forces alike, which finally drove the Palestinians out. The Haganah and the Irgun would launch massive surprise attacks on towns and villages, bombarding them with mortars, rockets and the celebrated David Ka. This was a home-made contraption that tossed 60lb of TNT some 300 yards, very inaccurately, into densely populated areas.”⁸

In his seminal work, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem: 1947–49*, and in well-documented articles, Benny Morris used declassified Israeli Cabinet documents to show the responsibility of the Zionist leaders and Jewish army for the expulsion of Palestine’s native inhabitants, with the help of the occasional massacre.⁹

Amnon Kapeliouk also examined Israeli government archives and showed how Israeli and Western public opinions were manipulated to believe in a version of the events of 1948 which bore little resemblance to the reality and the actual facts. Kapeliouk reported that at the beginning of 1948, during the first phase of the Zionist war plans, Ben-Gurion wrote in his diary: “During the assault we must be ready to strike a decisive blow, that is, either to destroy the town or expel its inhabitants so our people can replace them.”¹⁰

Simha Flapan also examined the question of Palestinian expulsion in declassified documents of state and Zionist archives as well as Ben-Gurion's own diary. He reached the same conclusion, namely "that there is no evidence to support Israeli claims. In fact, the declassified material contradicts the 'order' theory, for among these new sources are documents testifying to the considerable efforts of the AHC (Arab Higher Committee) and the Arab states to constrain the flight . . . Palestinian sources offer further evidence that even earlier, in March and April [of 1948], the Arab Higher Committee, broadcasting from Damascus, demanded that the population stay put and announced that Palestinians of military age must return from the Arab countries. All Arab officials in Palestine were also asked to remain at their posts. Why did such pleas have little impact? They were outweighed by the cumulative effect of Zionist pressure tactics that ranged from economic and psychological warfare to the systematic ousting of the Arab population by the army."

Flapan concluded: "Records are available from (Israeli) archives and diaries . . . [These records] provide overwhelming circumstantial evidence to show that a design was being implemented by the Haganah, and later by the IDF (Israeli Defence Forces), to reduce the number of Arabs in the Jewish state to a minimum, and to make use of most of their lands, properties and habitats to absorb the masses of Jewish immigrants."¹¹

In his more recent work, *Righteous Victims*, Benny Morris updates his previous work on the question of Palestinian refugees and concludes:

1. That recently declassified documents confirm the Zionist leadership had decided as early as July 1937 after the publication of the Peel Commission Report recommending the partition of Palestine, on "the transfer of at least several hundred thousand Palestinian Arabs – if not all of them – out of the areas of the Jewish state-to-be."
2. That the first wave of massive Palestinian flight, between December 1947 and March 1948 was caused by the campaign of terror and bombing waged by the revisionist Zionist organizations, the Irgun and the Stern Gang, but also by the mainstream Zionist military organization, the Haganah, which participated and carried its own expulsion as in the case of Caesara, midway between Tel Aviv and Haifa, on February 20, 1948.

3. That the second massive flight of the Palestinians, which took place between April and June, 1948, that is the flight from Haifa (April 2–May 1), from Jaffa (late April), from Tiberias (April 17–18), from Safad (May 10), “was the direct and immediate result of an attack on and conquest of Arab neighbourhoods and towns. In no case did a population abandon its homes before an attack; in almost all cases it did so on the very day of the attack and in the days immediately following . . . The echo of the slaughter on April 9 of the villagers of Deir Yassin . . . reinforced and symbolized this . . . this ‘atrocities factor’ was reinforced periodically during the months of fighting by other Jewish massacres, especially in October. Residents of a small number of villages – more than a dozen – were expelled before the start of the first truce (June 11) by Jewish troops; and some were intimidated by propaganda disseminated by Haganah agents . . .”
4. That the success of the offensive strategy of Plan D “clearly resulted in mass flight . . . Many commanders identified with the aim of ending up with a Jewish state with as small an Arab minority as possible.”
5. On the propagandistic version of events fabricated by Zionist leaders claiming that the Palestinians left because Arab leaders told them to leave, Morris concluded that on the contrary Arab leaders “repeatedly cautioned the inhabitants to stay put and tried to pressure those who had already fled the country to return, to no avail. Meanwhile the Haganah, certainly from mid-May on, adopted a policy of preventing refugees from returning to their homes, using live fire when necessary.”
6. Shortly after the formal inter-state war started with the intervention of the Arabs armies, the Israeli leaders decided to formally adopt a policy of actively preventing the return of Palestinian refugees and actively continuing the policy of conquest and expansion. Thus on June 16, 1948 the Israeli cabinet, with a formal vote, “resolved to bar the return of refugees . . . Abandoned villages were razed or mined or, later filled with new Jewish immigrants, as were abandoned neighbourhoods; fields were set alight . . . and new settlements were established on Arab sites and began to cultivate the abandoned fields.” “. . . So during the second half of the war, there was far less ‘spontaneous’ flight. Most of the exodus at this time was due to clear, direct causes, including brutal expulsion and deliberate harassment.”¹²

Dr Shlomo Ben-Ami, a historian and Foreign Minister of Israel in the Ehud Barak government in 1999–2001, admitted the now generally accepted, but still denied by Israel and its supporters in Washington, reality of the Zionist enterprise as an enterprise of conquest carried out ruthlessly which forcibly displaced its Palestinian victims with the help of terror tactics and massacres. Referring to the war of conquest in 1948, Dr Ben-Ami said: “The reality on the ground was that of an Arab community in a state of terror facing a ruthless Israeli army whose path to victory was paved not only by its exploits against the regular Arab armies, but also by the intimidation and at times atrocities and massacres it perpetrated against the civilian Arab community. A panic-stricken Arab community was uprooted under the impact of massacres that would be carved into the Arabs’ monument of grief and hatred.”¹³

The Israeli government refused to accept any responsibility for the refugee problem on the pretext that they ‘left’ Palestine voluntarily in response to Arab appeals to leave. This, as we have seen above, is a distortion of actual events designed to reject responsibility for the flight of the Palestinians. Even if the Zionists’ own version of events was to be believed, their refusal to re-admit the Palestinian refugees back to their country and homes stands on no grounds other than Israeli power to enforce the Zionist design to transform Palestine into a Jewish state with as few Arabs left in it as possible. As the distinguished Jewish psychologist Eric Fromm put it: “Just because the Arabs fled? Since when is that punishable by confiscation of property and by being barred from returning to the land on which a people’s forefathers have lived for generations?”¹⁴

Zionist leaders worried little about the implausibility of their version of events for they were reassured by the positive response in Europe and America and by the total ineptitude of the Arab information efforts. In addition, they seemed to have genuinely believed that the refugee problem would go away, and that the Palestinians would eventually settle in other Arab countries and be forgotten. Ben-Gurion opposed any Israeli involvement in efforts to solve the refugee problem, which he, along with Moshe Sharett, believed would disappear with time.

Underlying this belief, as with most Zionist views about the Arabs, seems to have been an essentially social Darwinian and racist approach to the Arab people and their culture, as we have seen at the beginning of

this book. In this regard, an evaluation of the Palestinian refugee problem prepared by the Near East Department of the Israeli Foreign Ministry is illuminatingly illustrative. It read in part: "The [Palestinian] refugees will find their place in the Diaspora. Those who can resist, will live thanks to natural selection, the others will simply crumble. Some of them will persist, but the majority will become a human heap, the scum of the earth and will sink into the lowest levels of the Arab world."¹⁵

Legalizing The Expropriation

When the war ended, the Jewish state, originally recommended to come into existence by the United Nations in 57% of Palestine, stood in military occupation of 77% of the country.

As one British writer put it: "Of the 1,300,000 Arab inhabitants, they [the Zionists] had displaced nearly 900,000. They came into possession of entire cities, or entire quarters of them, and hundreds of villages. All that was in them – farms and factories, animals and machinery, fine houses and furniture, carpets, cloths and works of art, all the goods and chattels, all the treasured family heirlooms of an ancient people – was there for the taking. Ten thousands shops, businesses and stores and most of the rich Arab citrus holdings – half of the country's total, fell into their hands."¹⁶

Taking Zionist figures, total Jewish land holdings on the eve of the proclamation of the state of Israel amounted to 9% of the arable land. This still means that when Israel was proclaimed a Jewish state "91% of the cultivable soil was neither owned nor leased by Jews. What was not vacant or publicly dedicated state domain was Arab under one form of right or another."¹⁷

The region that fell under Israeli control comprised more than 95% of the 'good' soil of mandated Palestine and 64% of the 'medium' soil. But this fertile land that was forcibly made part of Israel was not owned by Jews. The UN Conciliation Commission for Palestine "estimated that more than 80% of the territory ruled by Israel represented land owned or otherwise held by Arab refugees".¹⁸

Shortly after the proclamation of the state, Israeli leaders moved quickly to enact a number of ordinance and laws to legalize Israel's de facto control of Arab land. Thus, the Absentee Property Regulations of December 1948 empowered a custodian, from whose authority there was

no appeal, to declare vacant and abandoned any property whose owners were citizens of neighbouring Arab countries, or in any part of Palestine outside Israeli-held lines, or even Palestinians inside Israeli-controlled territories and who had moved from their habitual place of residence at any time since November 1947, even if only by a few metres. Israeli writer Don Peretz estimated that this allowed Israeli authorities to confiscate 40% of the properties of Arab citizens of the state of Israel.¹⁹

The Absentee Property Law of 1950 empowered the custodian to sell Arab properties, which previously he could only lease. The Jewish National Fund 'bought' these lands from the Israeli custodian and in turn 'leased' it back to Jewish citizens and groups in Israel.

Other Israeli laws followed. They were principally designed to 'legally' permit further expropriation of Arab lands for Jewish settlement. By the end of the Mandate, abandoned Arab properties were estimated to be nearly two and a half times the total area of Jewish-owned property. By 1954 more than one-third of the Israeli population lived on property abandoned by Palestinian Arabs who "left whole cities like Jaffa, Acre, Lydda, Ramleh, Baysan, Majdal; 388 towns and villages and large parts of 94 other cities and towns".²⁰

Moshe Smilansky, a spiritual figure and one of the early Zionist settlers in Palestine, remarked with indignation after Israeli leaders enacted the Land Acquisition Law of 1953, 'legalizing' further expropriation of Arab land, "When we came back to our country after having been evicted two thousands years ago, we called ourselves 'daring' . . . And now when they [Arab refugees] dared to return to their country where they lived for one thousand years before they were evicted or fled, they are called 'infiltrates' and shot in cold blood . . . And do we sin only against the refugees? Do we not treat the Arabs who remain with us as second-class citizens? Did a single Jewish farmer raise his hand in the parliament in opposition to a law that deprived Arab peasants of their land?"²¹

In her important study of the demographic transformation of Palestine, Janet Abu-Lughod concluded that by the end of 1948 "the UNRWA estimates of that period, which placed the number of Palestinian refugees as of the armistice date at slightly under 900,000 would not seem unreasonable . . . it is clear that the war of 1948 effected the dislocation of more than half of the original Arab inhabitants of Palestine, deprived some 60 per cent of their livelihoods, and drastically changed the lives of all".²²

Israeli Leaders Oppose Conciliation and Collective Negotiations with Arabs

Thanks to the Israeli government's extensive propaganda machine, the world was soon made to believe that immediately after their defeat the Arab countries started preparing for revenge with a fanatical commitment to the extermination of peace-loving Israel. "The truth, however," wrote Simha Flapan, "is that the Arabs, following their humiliating defeats, became involved in a series of splits, internal crises, convolutions, and upheavals that made any planning for a new war impossible. They covered up their conflicts with verbal threats while in fact agreeing to negotiate a transition from the armistice treaties to a permanent peace within the framework of the Palestine Conciliation Commission (PCC)." However, the Israeli leaders, particularly Prime Minister Ben-Gurion and Foreign Minister Sharett, "tried to dissuade the State Department from accepting the idea of conciliation altogether".²³

When their opposition to conciliation failed, Israeli leaders insisted on, and obtained from the United States, a guarantee that the PCC, established by UN resolution 194 of December 11, 1948 to deal with the repatriation of Palestinian refugees, would have no administrative authorities in dealing with the delineation of boundaries, the exchange of territories or political solution to the conflict.

Moreover, Israeli leaders were adamantly opposed to any collective negotiations with the Arab states while at the same time reiterating their refusal to allow the return of the refugees or to withdraw from the occupied Arab territories.

The intransigent position of the Israeli government infuriated the Americans who threatened that unless Israel cooperated with the PCC, its admission to the United Nations could be blocked. The Israelis finally came to the Peace Conference in Lausanne, Switzerland, on April 26, 1949. Israel and the Arab states attending signed the Lausanne Protocol committing themselves to achieving "as quickly as possible the objectives of the General Assembly Resolution of December 11, 1948, regarding the refugees, respect for their rights and the preservation of their property, as well as territorial and other questions".²⁴

But it quickly became clear that the Israeli leaders did not intend to respect the Lausanne protocol and were not interested in conciliation on the basis of the UN resolution 194. As Simha Flapan put it: "While the Arabs insisted that repatriation and Israeli acceptance of the UN

partition borders were the conditions for peace, Israel just as adamantly refused to accept either of those conditions . . . The Arabs were strongly inclined to acquiesce to the existence of a Jewish state, as shown not only by their acceptance of the Lausanne protocol but also by proposals for compromise tendered at secret meetings held despite public refusal to sit down with the Israelis. Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and the Palestinians were trying to save by negotiations what they had lost in the war – a Palestinian state alongside Israel. Israel, however, gave priority to its own economic, demographic and military consolidation, preferring tenuous armistice agreements to a definite peace that would involve territorial concessions and the repatriation of even a token number of refugees.”²⁵

Zionist Plans to Stampede Iraqi Jews

The same strategy of deception and terror was applied to induce Arab Jews to leave their countries and come to Israel. Nowhere were the tactics more successful than in Iraq where a thriving Jewish community of over 13,000 Iraqi Jews was reduced in the space of a few months to a mere 5,000. A bombing campaign was launched by an underground terrorist organization against the Iraqi Jewish community. After each bombing the number of Iraqi Jews applying to leave Iraq for Israel would swell on the assumption that it had become dangerous to live among Arab fanatics who were presumed to be the authors of the bombing campaign. Only years later was it established that the terror campaign had in fact been initiated by Zionist Jews with the help and encouragement of Zionist leaders in Israel.²⁶

Rabbi Elmer Berger, who served as chief executive officer of the American Council for Judaism, wrote a series of letters from the Middle East addressed to the then past-President and President of the American Council for Judaism. In one of these letters he pointed out how “By mid-1949 the big propaganda guns were already going off in the United States. American dollars were going to save the Iraqi Jews – whether Iraqi Jews needed saving or not. There were daily reports of ‘pogroms’ – in the *New York Times* and under datelines, which few noticed were from Tel Aviv.”²⁷

“Zionist agents”, continued Rabbi Berger, “began to appear in Iraq – among the youth – playing on a *general* uneasiness and indicating that

American Jews were putting up large amounts of money to take them to Israel, where everything would be in apple-pie order . . . In the United States the ‘pogroms’ were already underway and the Iraqi government was being accused of holding the Jews against their will . . . campaigning among Jews increased . . . The government was whip-sawed . . . accused of pogroms and violent action against Jews . . . But if the government attempted to suppress Zionist agitation attempting to stampede the Iraqi Jews, it was again accused of discrimination.”²⁸

Rabbi Berger concluded his letter by confessing: “You can, I think therefore, imagine the very great emotional disturbance I have experienced these past few days. It was compounded by my first visit to an Arab refugee camp yesterday . . . I could not escape the conclusion, however, as I looked at the squalor of these Arabs, that for greed and what we call ‘campaign Judaism’, 120,000 Iraqi Jews are now in a place they do not want to be, living in the homes and on the lands where, perhaps, some of the 3,000 miserable Arab refugees I saw yesterday once lived, and to which they would like to return.”²⁹

Duplicity and Intransigence Continue

To gain admission to the United Nations, the leaders of Israel successfully played out another strategy of deception. They undertook to respect and implement all United Nations Resolutions. No sooner was the new country admitted than the Israeli leaders reneged, with remarkable temerity, on these undertakings. Fulfilling their obligation to the international organization that gave them juridical cover of legality for the establishment of their state was clearly less of a priority than the consolidation of an expanding Israel with as few Arabs in it as possible. As British writers Michael Adams and Christopher Mayhew concluded: “Born as it was in violence and dissimulation, it was inevitable that the Zionist state should continue on the same lines, at least initially. The pattern of fraud, for it was nothing else, which won Israel admission to the United Nations in exchange for assurances that its government would respect the rulings for the United Nations on Palestine, was bound to persist so long as acceptance of the UN resolutions conflicted absolutely with Israel’s proclaimed policy.”³⁰

The White House felt embarrassment and frustration at the provocative and ungrateful attitude of the Jewish state whose establishment

owed a great deal to American support. On May 28, 1949, Truman sent an angry note to the Israeli government urging that it withdraw from the occupied territories and take back at least some of the Palestinian refugees. He expressed “deep disappointment at the Israeli refusal to make any of the desired concessions on refugees or boundaries at the Lausanne Conferences”. Truman stated that Israel’s attitude was “dangerous to peace in opposition to UN General Assembly resolutions”,³¹ and concluded by warning that in the case of continued Israeli refusal to cooperate “the U. S. government will regretfully be forced to the conclusion that a revision of its attitude toward Israel has become unavoidable”.³²

On June 8, the Israeli government formally rejected the American demand and insisted that “the war has proved the indispensability to the survival of Israel of certain vital areas not comprised originally in the share of the Jewish state”. The Israeli note also rejected pleas for the repatriation of the Palestinian refugees whom it described as “members of an aggressor group defeated in a war of its own making”.³³

The West Recognizes Israeli Conquests:

The Tripartite Declaration, 1950

Washington not only sponsored the creation of the state of Israel, it also joined France and Britain, whose capital of trust in the region was rather small, to support Israeli expansionism. Far from being outraged by the Israeli acquisition of additional Arab territories by force, all three Western powers offered to be the guarantors of the new status quo. The Tripartite Declaration of May 25, 1950 stated that the Western Powers were ending the arms embargo in order to enable the states of the region to “play their part in the defence of the area as a whole”. This essentially meant that the focal point of tension was shifting from the Arab–Israeli front and the question of Palestinian refugees to that of American preoccupation with the Cold War and the feared Russian threat to Western influence in the region.

The statement further proclaimed: “The three Governments, should they find that any of these states was preparing to violate frontiers or armistice lines, would, consistently with their obligations as members of the UN, immediately take action, both within and outside the UN, to prevent such violation.”³⁴ The three Western Powers were in essence serving notice that they were appointing themselves as the guardian of

the status quo in the region, and were prepared to act outside the UN where the Soviet veto would hinder their freedom of action, to ensure compliance with their policies, and to impose respect for the status quo imposed by Israeli conquests and expansion.³⁵ However, there was no tripartite declaration to enforce the will of the international community with regards to the rights of the victims dispossessed of, and expelled from, their country.

With the outbreak of the Korean war, one month after the Tripartite Declaration, coming soon after the 'fall' of China, the American preoccupation with the expanding communist influence became obsessive. The Republican administration of President Eisenhower came to power in 1952. It was not content with 'containment' of communism, which the Truman Doctrine had adopted, in 1947, as the basis of the American foreign policy. The Eisenhower administration was determined to 'roll it back'. A commitment to the Middle East remained but was largely rhetorical and there was increased emphasis on viewing the Middle East as a pawn in the Cold War against international communism. As a result, both Eisenhower and Churchill, back as Britain's Prime Minister, showed little sensitivity to, or interest in Arab nationalism. They were more interested in building defensive alliances to complete the encirclement of the Soviet Union, and the Middle East was an important link that had to be won over in the relentless anti-communist crusade.

At the 17th Congress of Zionism, held in Basle, Switzerland, in June–July 1931, Ben-Gurion had told his audience: "In eastern Palestine, there are broader and emptier acres, and Jordan is not necessarily the perpetual limit to our immigration and settlement."³⁶ Some twenty years later, the Zionist leader was still true to his convictions. In 1952, he reassured the Israeli people that the Jewish state had "been established in only a portion of the Land of Israel".³⁷

The Israeli leaders' commitment to an expansionist policy contained in it the seeds of further confrontation, no longer with the Palestinians who had become stateless, but with the Arab states, who were determined to resist Israeli expansionism.

This first phase of the Zionist project ended with the end of the 1947–49 war. The commitment to expanding the borders of the new Jewish state, while barring the Palestinian refugees from returning to their homes and land, would lay the foundation for the second phase of a conflict made inevitable by the dedication of the Zionist leaders to

making Palestine as Jewish as England is English. Theodor Herzl, the pioneer of political Zionism who laid out the strategy for the Zionist take over of Palestine, had been right: might did take precedence over right.

NOTES

- 1 Michel Bar-Zohar, *Ben-Gurion: The Armed Prophet* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1968), pp. 702–03 quoted in Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), p. 84.
- 2 Erskine B. Childers, *The Wordless Wish*, op. cit., p. 197.
- 3 Childers, “The Wordless Wish: From Citizens to Refugees”, in the *Transformation of Palestine*, op. cit., p. 182.
- 4 Walid Khalidi, “Plan Dalet: Master Plan for the Conquest of Palestine”, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. XVIII, no. I, Autumn 1988, pp. 57–8. See the correspondence in the *Spectator* generated by the publication in its May 12, 1961 issue of Erskine Childers’ article “The Other Exodus”. The correspondence was reproduced in a special issue of the *Journal of Palestine Studies* (Autumn 1988) devoted to Palestine: 1948.
- 5 Albert M. Hyamson, *Palestine Under the Mandate. 1920–1948* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1976), p. vi. Italics are mine.
- 6 Nahan Chofshi, *Jewish Newsletter*, New York, February 9, 1959, quoted in Michael Adams and Christopher Mayhew, *Publish it Not: The Middle East Cover-Up* (London: Longman, 1975), p. 161.
- 7 See Walid el-Khalidi, *Why Did the Palestinians Leave?: An Examination of the Zionist Version of the Exodus of 1948* (London: Arab Information Center, 1961).
- 8 See Natanel Lorch, *The Edge of the Sword: Israel’s War of Independence, 1947–49*, (New York: G. P. Putman), 1961, p. 103.
- 9 See Ian Black in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, March 23, 1986; Benny Morris, “Operation Dani and the Palestinian Exodus from Lydda and Ramale in 1948”, *The Middle East Journal* 40 (no. 1, Winter 1986, pp. 81–109); Benny Morris, “The Causes and Character of the Arab Exodus From Palestine: The Israeli Defense Forces Analysis Intelligence Branch Analysis of June 1948”, *Middle East Studies* (January 1986) (London); See also Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987).
- 10 See Yoram Nimrod, *Meetings at the Crossroads: Jews and Arabs in Palestine During Recent Generations* (in Hebrew) (Haifa: University of Haifa, 1984), p. 9, cited by Amnon Kapeliouk in “New Lights on the Israeli–Arab Conflict and the Refugee Problem and its Origins”, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, vol. XVI, no. 3 (Spring 1987), p. 17.
- 11 Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, op. cit., pp. 85–9.
- 12 Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist–Arab Conflict: 1881–1999* (London: John Murray, 1999), pp. 253–57.
- 13 Interview with Amy Goodman of Public Radio, *Democracy Now*, Feb 19, 2006.
- 14 *Jewish Newsletter*, New York, May 19, 1958.

- 15 Israeli State Archives, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Files-refugees, no. 2444/19. Cited in Kapeliouk "New Lights on the Israeli-Arab Conflict", op. cit., p. 21.
- 16 David Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch*, op. cit., pp. 142–43.
- 17 See John Ruedy, "Dynamics of Land Alienation", in Ibrahim Abu-Lughod (ed.), *The Transformation of Palestine* (Evanston: Northwest University Press, 1971), pp. 119–38, p. 135.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 See Don Peretz, *Israel and the Palestine Arabs* (Washington D. C.: The Middle East Institute, 1958), p. 142. See also Don Peretz, "Arabs vs. Israelis: Fiction and Fact", *Issues* (Fall 1959), 1–14.
- 20 Don Peretz, *Israel and the Palestine Arabs*, op. cit., p. 143
- 21 Quoted in Hans Kohn, "Zion and the Jewish National Idea", in Alan R. Taylor, and Richard N. Tetlie, *Palestine: A Search for Truth: Approaches to the Arab–Israeli Conflict* (Washington, D. C.: Public Affairs Press, 1970), pp. 22–54, p. 48.
- 22 Janet Abu-Lughod, "The Demographic Transformation of Palestine", in *The Transformation of Palestine*, op. cit., pp. 139–63, p. 161.
- 23 Ibid., pp. 212–13.
- 24 Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*, op. cit., p. 214.
- 25 Ibid., pp. 215–32.
- 26 See Naeim Giladi, *Ben-Gurion's Scandals: How the Haganah and Mossad Eliminated Jews* (Tempe, Arizona: Dandelion Books, 2003).
- 27 Elmer Berger, *Who Knows Better Must Say So* (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1970), pp. 30–33.
- 28 Ibid., p. 33.
- 29 Berger, *Who Knows Better Must Say So*, op. cit., p. 37.
- 30 Adams and Mayhew, *Publish it Not*, op. cit., p. 157.
- 31 US Foreign Policy, Compilation of Studies Prepared Under the Direction of the Committee on Foreign Relations (Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1960), Study no. 13 of June 9, 1960, pp. 1308–9 quoted in Alfred Lilienthal, *The Zionist Connection: What Price Peace?* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1978), pp. 91–2.
- 32 *Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers 1949*, The Near East, South Asia, and Africa, vol. VI (Washington, D. C.: 1971), p. 1074 quoted in ibid.
- 33 *Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers 1949*, op. cit., pp. 1104–5 quoted in Lilienthal, *The Zionist Connection*, op. cit.
- 34 See "Tripartite (Britain, France, and the United States) Declaration on Security in the Arab-Israeli Zone 25 May–21 June 1950", in Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East*, op. cit., p. 308.
- 35 See W. R. Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East 1945–1951: Arab Nationalism, the United States, and Post-war Imperialism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 583–90.
- 36 Mordekhai Nurock (ed. and trans. from Hebrew), *David Ben Gurion. Rebirth and Destiny of Israel* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954), p. 35.
- 37 State of Israel, *Government Yearbook*, 5713 (1952), p. 15.

The Arab–Israeli Conflict 1956–2000

The 1967 War

The establishment of Israel by force in 1948, its victory over the Arab armies, seizure of additional Palestinian territories and refusal to repatriate the Palestinian refugees set the stage for the second phase of the conflict: the Arab–Israeli conflict. In 1956, Britain, France and Israel attacked Egypt, using the excuse that President Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal threatened Western economic interests. Israeli forces occupied the Egyptian Sinai.

The tripartite campaign against Egypt, however, was a political disaster for the three countries, and a triumph for Egypt. The forceful objections of the United States administration of President Eisenhower, and the assertive opposition of the Soviet Union to the action of the three conspirators, eventually forced Britain, France, and Israel, into a humiliating withdrawal from Egypt.

Nasser emerged as a nationalist hero not only for the Egyptians but also for the whole Arab nation. The Egyptian President's argument that Israel was a greater threat to the Arab world than the Soviet Union confirmed the Arab nationalists' refusal to join Western military alliances directed against the Soviet Union. After Suez, Britain lost its ability to control the destiny of people in the Middle East. France would persist for a few more years in a losing battle to maintain its settler colonialism of Algeria, and Israel would be confirmed in the eyes of Arab nationalists as an extension of Western imperialism intent upon expansionism and domination in the region.

In June 1967, after a series of guerrilla operations by Fatah, then the main Palestinian resistance organization, operating from Arab countries, especially Jordan and Syria, and following very punitive Israeli military reprisals, especially against Jordan and Syria, and ill-fated Arab rhetorical escalation, Israel launched a lightning strike against Egypt, Jordan and Syria, and seized and occupied the remaining 22% of mandated Palestine

(the West Bank and Gaza), as well as the Egyptian Sinai and the Syrian Golan Heights.

Notwithstanding the pro-Israeli accounts of the war and its causes in the Western media and academia,¹ Israeli leaders knew that Egypt had no offensive intentions against Israel, and that the Egyptian troops which had been dispatched to the Sinai had been no more than a symbolic gesture of solidarity with Syria which had suffered increasingly punitive Israeli strikes (for which the UN had censured Israel). Israeli General Yitzhak Rabin admitted that fact in a statement published in February 1968 by the French newspaper *Le Monde*. Rabin said that he “did not think that Nasser wanted war. The two divisions he sent to Sinai on May 14 would not have been sufficient to launch an offensive against Israel. He knew it and we knew it.”² Nasser had also told the United States’ Johnson administration that he was prepared to submit the dispute of whether or not Egypt had acted legally in closing off the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping, to the International Court of Justice. However, Israeli leaders were not interested in this or in any of the other proposals for a peaceful settlement by Egypt, which the Americans were finding difficult to turn down.³ Israeli leaders were interested in launching a war. In addition, according to Israeli historian Jon Kimche, the Johnson administration secretly encouraged the Israeli leaders to go to war, while publicly urging a peaceful solution to the crisis: “. . . In effect, what happened during the last days of May,” wrote Jon Kimche, “was that the United States had reached an understanding with the Israeli defence forces which cleared the way for the 5 June initiative . . .”⁴

The speed with which the Israeli attack crushed the Arab armies of Egypt, Syria and Jordan spelled the end of Arab nationalism and marked a turning point in the Arab–Israeli conflict. It was no longer a conflict over whether Israel would accept the repatriation of the Palestinian refugees, it now acquired a new dimension of inter-state conflict; Arab states now had parts of their national territories occupied by Israel. The conflict had produced more refugees and the Israeli armies had now achieved what they were prevented from achieving in 1947–49, the complete control of Mandated Palestine. As before, the Israelis were determined not to give in to any pressure to withdraw from the territories they had just conquered.

The speed and magnitude of the Israeli army’s victory in 1967 also introduced another crucial dimension into the conflict. Israel came to be viewed as a ‘strategic asset’ in the American foreign policy armoury for

waging the Cold War against the Soviet Union. Israel could now act as the American military agent in the region, exposing the weaknesses and unreliability of those Arab nationalist regimes which were a double liability in the eyes of Washington: they received support from the Soviet Union, and they were also a threat to the conservative Arab order, guardians of the oil wealth, and the strategic geography judged vital to American national interests. With Israel as a new Sparta, Arab nationalism was checked, Soviet encroachment halted and the conservative pro-Western Arab regimes no longer threatened by the Arab Cold War that pitted them against Arab nationalist regimes. In this equation, the Palestinians were relegated to the background.

The 1967 UN Security Council Resolution 242 essentially called for the settlement of the Arab–Israeli conflict on the basis of Israeli withdrawal from the Arab territories conquered by Israel in 1967 (there was no mention of the Palestinian Arab territories occupied by Israel in 1947–49), in return for an end of belligerency and peace. There was no talk of a Palestinian state or Palestinian political rights. UN Resolution 242 simply referred to the Palestinians as refugees.

In 1969, US Secretary of State William Rogers proposed a peace plan for the Arab–Israeli conflict based on Resolution 242's principle of land for peace. It was accepted by Egyptian President Nasser, but rejected by Israel, and torpedoed by Henry Kissinger, Rogers' rival in the Nixon White House.

Persistent Israeli Failure to Withdraw from the Occupied Territories

Israeli leaders persistently refused to withdraw from the occupied territories and consistently preferred land to peace, while professing their readiness to establish peaceful relations with their neighbours. The major preoccupation in Israeli political and military circles seemed to be how to get maximum land and water and minimum Arabs from the newly conquered Arab territories.

The option of annexation presented the advantage of acquiring all the land, but the distinct liability of getting the Palestinian Arab population with it. Under this scenario, the Arab population could either be given political rights, and become Israeli citizens, in which case their numbers would effectively transform the Israeli society into a bi-national

state – an unacceptable prospect. Alternatively, it could be kept captive and disenfranchised without any political rights, thus effectively transforming Israel into an official apartheid state, an unattractive alternative that no amount of propaganda or deception could obscure. The option of annexation was therefore discarded in favour of a compromise: getting as much land and water as possible, with as few Arabs as possible. This was the Allon Plan of the Labour party, which proposed the annexation of about 40% of the occupied territories and the granting of some form of autonomy or the return of Jordanian rule, to the rest.

The right-wing Israeli leaders insisted that there must be a way to improve on this plan and get more land and less Arabs. They realized that the 1948 ‘solution’ could not be repeated, and so they came up with a strategy for getting the land but not the Arabs: massive transfer of population to another country. This was the Ariel Sharon plan of “Jordan is Palestine”.

The Campaign of Deception Continues

In any event, the Israeli leaders needed to explain why they were not interested in peace agreements that returned all the occupied Arab territories conquered in 1967, or which allowed the return of the Palestinian refugees. Once again the Israel propaganda machine had to go into operation. The same strategies of deception that proved remarkably effective in the first phase of the Zionist project were now applied to the Arab–Israeli conflict. They included such claims as “Israel triumphed against overwhelming odds” in its first war, “the Palestinian refugees left their homes willingly”, “the Arabs were determined to throw the Jews into the sea”, “Israel always wanted peace but none of its Arab neighbours wanted peace” and, “Israel was threatened with extinction and that is why it had to attack its Arab neighbours and seize and occupy the West Bank, Gaza, the Sinai and the Golan Heights.”

The campaign was effective partly as a result of the Arab failure in the public information and public relations field and their inability to present their case to the makers of Western public opinion, and partly as a result of a Western media and scholarship biased to the Israeli view of the conflict. The European and North American media, now an increasingly dominant, if partial, source of information and education, uncritically accepted version of events effectively propagated by Israeli

leaders. Thus, undeniable realities such as Zionist destruction of Palestinian society and displacement of its people were presented and interpreted within a context that aroused sympathy for the displacer not the displaced. Media and scholarship in the West depicted Israel as an outpost of Western civilization in the midst of an alien and inhospitable culture, exploited ‘human interest’ themes with resonance in the North American political culture such as hardships faced by a society of immigrants, an underdog facing and triumphing over overwhelming odds, perseverance against natural and human adversity and the frontier mentality of bravery and conquest.

The Cold War played a role in this drama too. The American obsession with containing communism, and the Western support for Israel as a ‘Western post of democracy’ in a sea of hostile military–socialist–nationalist regimes supported by the Soviet Union, clashed with the rising nationalism and anti-imperialist commitments of the recently independent Arab countries. President Nasser of Egypt would repeatedly point out to Western interlocutors that it was unrealistic for the West to expect him to view the Soviet Union, thousands of miles away and with all local Egyptian communists in jail, as a threat to Egypt when Israel was holding a gun at his neck right in his backyard. But the Cold War and the American policy of containment had a logic of their own, which admitted no rival arguments. The result was that the ‘strategic role’ of Israel in the Middle East distorted and displaced the underlying realities of the Palestinian conflict and the Arab–Israeli conflict. Henry Kissinger, US Secretary of State in the Nixon and Ford administrations, was particularly adept at cultivating the geopolitical dimensions of the Middle East conflict as the only paradigm worth considering, while remaining insensitive to its human dimension.

In effect, the conquering Zionist political culture could count on sympathetic reactions in the West regardless of its actions against the original inhabitants of Palestine, or against Israel’s Arab neighbours. The context thus established remained the dominant frame of reference within which the conflict over Palestine, and the Arab–Israeli conflict, were interpreted and ‘covered’.

For instance, a special study focused on media analysis of Israel’s responsibility in the Qibya massacre, in 1953, in which troops led by Ariel Sharon forced the Arab inhabitants “to remain inside until their homes were blown up over them”⁵ – an act which evoked harsh condemnation

from the American Jewish community and was censured by the UN Security Council. The author of the study, Ralph Crow, concluded that although “reported facts were overwhelmingly pro-Arab” expressions of opinion in the media continued, “to favour the Israeli cause irrespective of the merits of the particular case in question”.⁶

This reality remained largely unchallenged and received public confirmation by insiders in the know. Thus, retired CBS News Vice-President Ernest Leiser stated: “over the years I’ve detected – and it was certainly true of my own news judgements – that Israel is given the ‘benefit of the doubt’ whenever possible”.⁷ An Israeli government official spoke of a number of American Jews “from network executives to bookers . . . who are more loyal to Israel than to their employer. This translates, he added, into ‘favourites’ ranging from sympathetic coverage to getting negative stories about Israel killed.”⁸

As we will now see, new Israeli historians, such as Tom Segev, Benny Morris, Amnon Kapeliouk and Meron Benvenisti, and not so new writers such as the late Simha Flapan, have in the last 20 years or so challenged the Israeli edifice of propaganda that made it possible to blame the victim. More recently, Eugene Rogan and Avi Shlaim have also added to the growing corpus of evidence from the new historians, with their 2001 book, *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948*,⁹ while Shlomo Ben-Ami, a historian and a former Foreign Minister in the Ehud Barak government 1999–2001, reaches the same inescapable conclusions in his 2005 book *Scars of War, Wounds of Peace*.

Simha Flapan wrote about the myths and realities surrounding the establishment of the state of Israel “in the hope of sweeping away the distortions and lies that have hardened into sacrosanct myth . . . and had become accepted as historical truth”.¹⁰

Former Israeli politician Meron Benvenisti documented the systematic dispossession of the Palestinians. In his 1985 study *Land Alienation in the West Bank*, widely circulated in the West, he highlighted the hitherto little publicized fact that “in 1947, the Jews possessed less than 10% of the total land of mandatory Palestine (with the rest in Arab hands) . . . Now the Arabs (including the Arab citizens of Israel) are left in possession of 15% of that land.” Benvenisti believes that with regard to the occupied Arab territories the process of dispossession is so advanced and “Jewish presence is so extensive that it precludes the possibility of a peace settlement based on a return of the West Bank to Arab sovereignty”.¹¹

In his book *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem: 1947–49* Benny Morris shatters the “Palestinian exodus myth”¹² by showing Zionist leaders’ and Jewish armies’ responsibility for the expulsion of Palestinians from Palestine, with the help of the occasional massacre, between 1947 and 1949. Although other scholars, Walid Khalidi and Erskine Childers in particular, have demonstrated the Zionist armies’ role in driving the Palestinians out of Palestine and the unreliability of the Israeli story about the Palestinian exodus in 1948, this was the first time that an Israeli scholar, drawing from previously unpublished army and cabinet documents, had established the Zionists’ responsibility for the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. Referring to the long-dominant Israeli version of the events, which was uncritically accepted in the West, Morris said: “people’s minds have been warped by 40 years of nonsense”.¹³

In an article describing the Jewish military operations which resulted in “carnage” and “slaughter” of Palestinians in Lydda and Ramle in 1948 Morris wrote that when Ben-Gurion was asked: “What shall we do with the Arabs?” Ben-Gurion made a dismissive, energetic gesture with his hands and said: “expel them (garesh otam).”¹⁴

In discussing an updated edition of his book with the Israeli paper *Haaretz* in January 2004, Morris describes how his new research uncovered more massacres, more rapes, and more expulsion of the Palestinians in 1947–48. Intriguingly, however, he seems to fault Ben-Gurion for not completely ethnic-cleansing the land of the Palestinians to make Israel completely Jewish. He suggests that such a solution might be necessary in the future, and justifies it by the rationalization that a completely Jewish state is a higher moral priority than the preservation of Palestinian society. He refers approvingly to fascist leader Vladimir Jabotonsky and compares the Palestinians to animals who have to be “caged in”, as Israeli Prime Minister Sharon began to do with the Israeli Wall in the West Bank, separating Palestinians from Israelis and Palestinians from Palestinians, all the while expropriating more Palestinian land.

In his 2001 book, *One Palestine, Complete*, Israeli historian Tom Segev documents the generally denied reality of the British support for the Zionist project in Palestine and concludes that Israel could not have been established without the support of the British forces in Palestine.

Speaking to Suzy Hansen of the web magazine *Salon* on December 8, 2001, Tom Segev explained why his book's assertion that that Israel owed its existence to the British was so vehemently attacked in Israel: "we all grew up to believe that Israel was born out of a heroic struggle against the British oppressors, which was true for a very short period of time at the very end [of the British Mandate]. That is the collective memory and that is also what we learn in school. We don't really learn how supportive the British were of the Zionist movement from the very beginning. We also don't realize that the Zionist movement and Israel owe so much to British support. That comes as an unpleasant surprise to those people who were taught to study and remember our heroic struggle."¹⁵

A recognition of the reality that the Zionist enterprise of conquest dispossessed and displaced its Palestinian victims was not only limited to the new historians. Some Israeli leaders spoke with candor about the nature of the Zionist conquest. For instance, former Defence Minister Moshe Dayan famously told an audience in 1969: "Jewish villages were built in the place of Arab villages. You do not even know the names of these Arab villages, and I do not blame you because geography books no longer exist. Not only do the books not exist, the Arab villages are not there either. Nahlal arose in the place of Mahlul; Kibbutz Gvat in the place of Jibta; Kibbutz Sarid in the place of Huneifis; and Kefar Yehushua in the place of Tal al-Shuman. There is not a single place built in this country that did not have a former Arab population."¹⁶

More recently, Dr Shlomo Ben-Ami stated: "Israel, as a society, also suppressed the memory of its war against the local Palestinians, because it couldn't really come to terms with the fact that it expelled Arabs, committed atrocities against them, dispossessed them. This was like admitting that the noble Jewish dream of statehood was stained forever by a major injustice committed against the Palestinians and that the Jewish state was born in sin."¹⁷

From Camp David to the First Palestinian Uprising

When Egyptian President Nasser died in 1970, the era of Arab nationalism came to an end. His successor, President Anwar El Sadat, ended socialism at home and nationalism abroad. In 1972, he expelled Soviet military advisors from Egypt, formed a new Arab coalition with the conservative

Arab regimes, and openly aligned Egypt with American foreign policy priorities, expecting in return some American pressure to get Israel to withdraw from the occupied Arab territories. When US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger failed to appreciate the importance and significance of the new Egyptian policy, and remained frozen in his Cold-Warrior analysis of the Middle East, the Egyptians and the Syrians mounted, in October 1973, a coordinated military offensive to liberate their territories from Israeli occupation. The Egyptian and Syrian armies made an honourable showing, but failed to force the Israelis to withdraw from all the Arab territories conquered in 1967.

In November 1977, President Sadat made a dramatic visit to Israel and offered Israeli leaders a comprehensive peace based on withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories, and self-determination for the Palestinians. Then, in 1978, American President Jimmy Carter brought Egyptian and Israeli leaders together to the US presidential retreat of Camp David. However, President Carter was unable to pressure Begin to agree to American foreign policy positions in the region. Instead, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and his team of negotiators skilfully manoeuvred President Sadat and his negotiators into a separate peace agreement, effectively removing Egypt from the conflict. Egyptian Foreign Minister Mohammad Ibrahim Kamel immediately tendered his resignation in protest. The Egyptians signed the Camp David Accords at the White House in Washington in September 1978, and later, in March 1979, they signed an Egyptian–Israeli Peace Treaty at Blair House, Washington.¹⁸

The Camp David Agreements, as expected, came to represent nothing more than a separate peace between Egypt and Israel. This removed Egypt, the most powerful Arab country, from the confrontation line with Israel. Israeli Prime Minister Begin and his Defence Minister General Ariel Sharon felt that the peace treaty with Egypt cleared the way for them to settle the Palestine question once and for all. Relying on the usual strategy of deception and force, they carefully prepared an invasion plan for Lebanon to stamp out Palestinian nationalism whose proponents, having been crushed in Jordan in 1970, had moved to Lebanon where they were developing an assertive militancy and harassing northern Israeli settlements from Lebanon.

Begin, like Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir before him, denied that there was a Palestinian people and called the Palestinians “inhabitants

of Judea and Samaria”, referring to the West Bank and Gaza by their biblical names. The most he was prepared to offer the Palestinians was some autonomy under Israeli rule, as he intensified the building of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, to complete the transformation of Palestine in order to make it as “Jewish as England is English”. Since Palestinian nationalism symbolized the struggle and aspirations of the Palestinian people for freedom and independence, it became the principal target of the Begin–Sharon strategy, hence the plan to remove Egypt from the equation, to clear the way for the invasion of Lebanon and the final confrontation with Palestinian nationalism.

Shortly after finalizing the separation of Egypt from the Palestine conflict with the withdrawal of the last Israeli soldiers from the Egyptian Sinai in April 1982, the Begin–Sharon team mounted their planned invasion of Lebanon in June 1982. The invasion was deceptively presented to the world as a limited self-defence incursion into Lebanon that would stop 40 km inside Lebanese territories. The true intentions of the invasion, however, quickly became evident when the Israeli armies blasted their way, against unexpectedly stiff Palestinian and Lebanese resistance, all the way to Beirut, apparently with the acquiescence of Ronald Reagan and US Secretary of State Alexander Haig in Washington. The Israeli invaders laid siege to the Lebanese capital, and subjected it to merciless bombardments, until they finally forced the evacuation from Lebanon of the Palestinian fighters of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and of all the Palestinian political leadership including Yasser Arafat himself.

Shortly after, Ariel Sharon’s commanders in Lebanon stood by as Christian Lebanese militias assaulted the now undefended Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatilla and massacred their populations. Hundreds, if not thousands (on September 22, 1982 the International Red Cross estimated the number of murdered victims at 2,400) were massacred during three days of bloodshed. In 1983, the Kahan Commission (named after the President of the Israeli Supreme Court) appointed by the Israeli government, investigated the massacre, and concluded that “Minister of Defence [Sharon] bears personal responsibility” and should “draw the appropriate personal conclusions arising out of the defects revealed with regard to the manner in which he discharged the duties of his office”. Sharon resigned, but later joined the Cabinet. On June 18, 2001, survivors of the massacre lodged a complaint against Sharon in a Belgian court.

The Human Rights Watch organization reported in 2001 that “there is abundant evidence that war crimes and crimes against humanity were committed on a wide scale in the Sabra and Shatilla massacre, but to date, not a single individual has been brought to justice”.¹⁹ In 2001, Ariel Sharon became Prime Minister of Israel.

The Palestinians may have been militarily defeated and dispersed at the end of the Lebanon war, but their nationalism remained nonetheless undiminished. However, deprived of the means of harassing Israel from Lebanon and dispersed throughout the Arab world, with Tunis being the new headquarters of the Palestine Liberation Organization, the Palestinian military option against Israel lost whatever credibility it might have held for many Palestinians.

In December 1987, the first *Intifada* (uprising) broke out in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories. The *Intifada* confronted the influential Western media with bad news, or at least with what Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky call “inconvenient facts”.²⁰ The spectacle of stone-throwing Palestinian youngsters, unafraid and undeterred by the daily brutalities of the Israeli army, evoked sympathies for the Palestinians, especially in the North American media, and created a context for challenging the edifice of distortions cultivated by Israeli propaganda.²¹

Israeli repression of Palestinian nationalism was condemned for its “grotesque” and “vicious” character. The Israeli policy of systematically “uprooting [the Palestinians] from their homeland” was denounced. Headlines and news stories recognized the existence of “the Palestinian people” and referred to “Occupied Palestinian Territories”²² instead of the impersonal “Occupied Territories”. Revelations by Israeli scholar Benny Morris about the responsibility of Zionist leaders for the expulsion of Palestinians from Palestine, along with a critical article by this writer, were printed under headlines recognizing the long unpublicized “brutal truth [about] Palestine”.²³ Editorials hinted at the Nazi-like character of the Israeli actions as they condemned “the shootings, the deportations, the house burnings . . .”.²⁴

The influential US media – the *New York Times*, CBS, CBC, CNN and their ilk – the opinion makers of the elites and the educated classes, continued to remain close to the ‘official’ history of the conflict, however, and thereby directly or indirectly continued blaming the victim.²⁵

The Palestinian uprising produced a new militant leadership from within. This young leadership challenged not only the Israeli occupiers,

and the dominant perceptions in the Western media and academia, but also the old Palestinian leadership itself. The uprising quickly forced the Palestinian leadership in exile to come up with a new strategy. Meeting in Algiers in November 1988, the Palestine National Council renounced its plan for a secular bi-national state in Palestine where Jews, Christians and Muslims would have lived together. The PLO now accepted the two-state solution based on UN Resolution 181 of 1947 that recommended the partition of Palestine into two states: Israel and a reduced Palestine.

The Oslo Agreement of 1993 and Subsequent Agreements

Following the Gulf War against Iraq in 1991, the Madrid Middle East Peace Conference, to which the US administration of President George H. W. Bush dragged reluctant Israeli Prime Minister Itzhak Shamir, established a framework for a comprehensive peace in the Middle East based on the land for peace formula. In 1993, the PLO and Israel agreed to issue a statement of mutual recognition and signed what came to be known as the Oslo Accords that called for a gradual withdrawal of Israeli forces of occupation and a final settlement based on land for peace by 1999.²⁶ The Oslo Accords, however, left the Israelis free to consolidate existing settlements in the West Bank and build new ones, a process that has continued from Oslo until the present day. Israel maintained tight control over Palestinian freedom of action, and carved up Palestinian territories in the West Bank with Jewish settlements and bypass highways that made territorial congruity for a future Palestinian state all but impossible, all under the ‘peace process’ of the Oslo Agreement.

Needless to say, the Oslo Agreement, like the Camp David framework for a comprehensive settlement before it, and the series of agreements that were subsequently signed by Israelis and Palestinians in Washington, Cairo, Wye River Plantation, Sharm El Sheikh and so on, basically confirmed the relationship of inequality between the parties. As an Israeli professor from Tel Aviv University put it, the Oslo Agreement represented the “onset of apartheid” for the Palestinians. “It is a plan for enslavement”, wrote Noam Chomsky, “with about as much independence for the Territories – less maybe – as the Bantustans had. So that means that the whole struggle against apartheid is just *beginning* right now, not ending.”²⁷

The end of the Israeli military government of occupation, for instance, did not necessarily mean the end of its various prerogatives and powers, which had been assumed by the Israeli government itself. Thus, the agreements provided for Israeli forces to move into the self-rule areas in case of outbreak of general hostilities “or imminent threat of such outbreak”. This was amply illustrated when Israeli forces reoccupied, at leisure, many areas under Palestinian self-rule to stamp out the second Palestinian uprising that erupted in September 2000.

Israeli governments, moreover, imposed severe restrictions on the movement of Palestinians between the West Bank and Gaza. On September 4, 1997, the so-called ‘Israeli Military Governor of the West Bank’, issued a decree forbidding any person from entering Areas B and C before obtaining a permit. That means that residents of Palestinian cities in Area A (representing 3% of the West Bank and 27% of the population) technically cannot go to the 500 villages in Areas B and C without Israeli permission. During Israeli-imposed sieges, even ministers and members of the PLO Executive Committee needed to get prior Israeli permit to travel between the two areas. These restrictions have broken down many of the economic and political unification structures of the two areas that have been built by Palestinian professional and political organizations.

The Ben-Gurion doctrine of creating “military faits accomplis” continues to be actively applied by the various Israeli governments. Thus, continuous construction activities, the building of bypass highways and the expansion of settlements in Jabal Abu Ghneim, Efrat and Ras al-Amoud are designed to accelerate a process of creating faits accomplis. This is part of a strategy of demographic transformation, similar to what happened in Galilee after 1948, that is designed to reverse the status of the West Bank from being Palestinian land with a few scattered Jewish settlements, to a land dominated by expanding Jewish settlements with dispersed pockets of Arab populations. Various Israeli governments have also been actively carving up the Palestinian territory into four separate cantons: the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem, the southern area of the West Bank including Bethlehem and Hebron, and the centre and northern part of the West Bank.

Successive Israeli governments have also been following a deliberate strategy of isolating Jerusalem from the West Bank. While Jewish settlements in Jerusalem have been mushrooming, construction by

Palestinians in their own city has been prevented and restricted, thus pushing those Palestinians who have been refused construction permits to live in the outskirts of the city. The Israeli authorities then claim that these Palestinians are non-residents and withdraw their Jerusalem identity cards.

When Benjamin Netanyahu came to power in Israel in June 1996, his government demanded a renegotiation of the agreement on Hebron. The Palestinians had to agree to renegotiate the status of Hebron and to accept leaving 20,000 Palestinians and 20% of the city under direct Israeli military rule and subject to the demands of the 400 Jewish settlers illegally living in the city centre.

The problem of the Palestinian refugees has essentially been postponed from one agreement to another. It is quite clear, however, that there is certainly no possibility of a massive Palestinian homecoming. The fate of the roughly 800,000 Palestinian refugees from the 1967 war is unsettled. The 1948 refugees have essentially been asked by the PLO leadership, under the terms of the Washington Declaration of Principles of September 1993, to give up their dream of one day going back to the lands and homes from which they were expelled or fled in terror in 1948–49. Israel remains in control of the Rafah border crossing to Egypt, as well as the Allenby Bridge crossing to Jordan. Israel thus maintains control over who can leave and who can enter the new Palestinian entity.

Various Israeli governments have also retained the right for themselves and for their army to continue to use roads freely within the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area. Needless to say that the Palestinians and their police force will enjoy no reciprocal freedom of movement and use of roads and infrastructures inside Israel. Any incident with, or attack against, Jewish settlers could prompt the Israeli government to close off the 'liberated' self-rule area much as the military government did when the area was occupied. This is precisely what the Israelis have been doing since the second Palestinian *Intifada* erupted in September 2000.

In their bilateral negotiations for a separate peace with the Egyptians in the late 1970s, the Israelis persistently demanded what they called a 'normalization' of relations with Egypt. It was a process designed to get the Egyptian government and people to accept the Zionist foundations of the state of Israel. Such foundations include the 'historic right' of Jews to the land of Palestine and the racial-exclusionist character of a Zionist settler movement based on the dispossession of the indigenous people of Palestine.²⁸

The Cairo Agreement of 1994 started the Palestinian leadership on the same road of 'normalization' with its implicit expectation of acceptance of Zionist ideology. The agreement committed the parties to preventing incitement and hostile propaganda against each other by any organization, group, or individuals within their jurisdiction. This is an understandable and indeed desirable feature of any peace agreement between former enemies when there is no longer a tangible cause for hostility or grievance. But this is not the case here, since the very symbols of a racially-exclusionist ideology based on dispossession, namely the Jewish settlements, are protected by the agreement. And since the Jewish settlements are universally considered by the international community as illegal acts of dispossession condemned by countless UN resolutions, and viewed by various US administrations as an obstacle to peace, the Cairo Agreement in effect asked the PLO to silence and suppress Palestinian protestations against the illegality of the Jewish settlements and continued occupation. This, the Palestinian Authority has been unable to do, as became clear from the latest Palestinian uprising, and the Israeli response to it.

The Wye Agreement, signed in October 1998, dealt with the issues of redeployment of the Israeli army of occupation, more security issues (read security for the Israelis and the Jewish settlements), and with reviving talks about the transitional period. These included the issues of the airport, the seaport, the industrial zone, safe passage, Israeli-held prisoners, legal and economic coordination and the permanent talks. But the major part of the agreement focused on security issues, which was the main concern of the Israeli negotiators. The redeployment of the Israeli army of occupation was made conditional upon the compliance of the Palestinian Authority with the security conditions of the agreement.

The American CIA was to play a supervisory role in this regard, in coordination with the Israelis. Thus, the conditional redeployment called for the transfer of 12% of Area C to Area B, including a development of 3% of this land into a nature reserve (a strange proposition for a land whose original owners are kept captive in crowded refugee camps); then 15.2% of Areas C and B was to be transferred to Area A, thus bringing the area under the Palestinian Authority's total control to about 18.2%. In Area A, the Palestinians were to control 21.8% but not control the security of the area. In Area B, 60% would be totally controlled by

Israel. Thus, in reality the Palestinian Authority was to control less than 20% of the West Bank, which is approximately 4% of Palestine.

The Wye Agreement also required the Palestinian Authority to permanently amend the Charter of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which the Palestinian Authority did through a series of sessions held by the Executive Committee and the Central Council. On the other hand, the agreement did not require Israel to stop building new Jewish settlements or to stop expanding the existing ones in the occupied Palestinian territories.

In May 2001, the George W. Bush administration sent Mr George Tenet, the Director of the CIA, to examine the issue of security with Palestinians and Israelis. His recommendations, made public in the second week of June 2001, included a reiteration of the obligation on the Palestinian National Authority to work harder to prevent any Palestinian attacks against Jewish settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories.

The Mitchell Report, which was prepared following the eruption of the latest Palestinian uprising in late 2000, and made public in May 2001, called on the Israeli government to stop all settlement activities as a necessary condition for the revival of the defunct 'peace process'. Israeli Prime Minister Sharon made it clear that his government had no intention of stopping settlement activities.

The Second Palestinian *Intifada*: Still Blaming the Victim

Thus, various Israeli governments, while ostensibly negotiating for peace, continued to consolidate their hold on the occupied Palestinian territories. As Yasser Arafat, President of the Palestinian National Authority, reminded the readers of the *New York Times*: "since the signing of the Oslo Accord, in 1993, the Palestinian people have endured a doubling of the Israeli settlers, expansion of illegal Israeli settlements on Palestinian land, and increased restrictions on freedom of movement".²⁹

Seriously weighted in favour of the occupier as it was, the Oslo Agreement never received any enthusiastic support among the Israeli right. Chief among its opponents was Ariel Sharon, who decided, with the approval of Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, to carry out a provocative visit to Al-Aqsa Mosque in September 2000. The Palestinians threw rocks, the Israeli soldiers responded with rubber bullets, and the second Palestinian uprising erupted. Israeli forces reoccupied Palestinian territories, intensified their repression, demolished houses, arrested people

and inflicted brutalities against defenceless populations, which the UN Commission for Human Rights described as “crimes against humanity”.

With the intensification of the Palestinian uprising and the Israeli repression of it, the influential media in the West, especially in North America, fell back on the familiar strategy of blaming the victim. It repeated the Bush administration-endorsed Israeli claim that the Palestinians, and especially Yasser Arafat, were to blame for the failure of the ‘peace process’ and for the eruption of violence. Thus, Thomas Friedman from the *New York Times* repeatedly claimed that the Palestinians could have had their State and ended the Israeli occupation if Yasser Arafat had accepted the Israeli peace offer at Camp David in July 2000.³⁰

On March 30, 2002, during one of the now routine Israeli re-occupations of Palestinian territories, and after Israeli soldiers blasted their way through Yasser Arafat’s compound in Ramallah, demolished its surrounding infrastructures, and forced Arafat into confinement, without electricity, water or telephone lines, CNN’s Christiana Ammanpur asked Arafat on the mobile telephone if *he* was ready to put an end to the violence. As Israeli brutalities against defenceless Palestinians intensified and Arafat’s confinement and isolation became more humiliating, two *New York Times* reporters opined that “Mr Arafat gave no indication that *he* was ready for a truce.”³¹

It was clear that the defining question of the conflict was to be: when will the Palestinians guarantee the security of the Israelis and the Jewish settlements? Surely the reverse is a more compelling reality, namely: when will Israel free the Palestinians and give them peace and security? But few influential public opinion makers in the West cared to ask such a question.

What is remarkable about this reversal of roles designed to blame the victim is the way it presents itself in the face of clearly contrary visual evidence: the sight of the fourth most powerful army in the world inflicting brutalities on a defenceless population. This reversal of roles is also based on myths: a necessary component of the strategy of blaming the victim. Thus it is claimed that Arafat made no concessions at the 2000 Camp David II negotiations with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, and that his alleged refusal to make concessions caused the failure of the ‘peace process’, and that *he* (Arafat) started a war of terror to end the ‘peace process’.

To counter the dominant story in the Western media that the Palestinians missed a historic opportunity, Robert Malley, a member of

President Clinton's negotiation team at Camp David, wrote that it was a myth, and the claim that the Palestinians made no concession was also a myth.³² Israeli Prime Minister Barak's own Minister of Justice Yossi Beilin also confirmed that the claim that the Palestinians made no concession was a myth.³³ Beilin also confirmed that Ariel Sharon, who had never hidden his opposition to the so-called 'peace process', "decided after being elected prime minister, to terminate the peace process".³⁴ And he decided to do it the only way he knew how to, by waging a senseless and brutal war against a defenceless population. On March 19, 2002, the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan wrote to Sharon protesting against the "disturbing pattern in the treatment of civilians and humanitarian relief workers" by the Israeli army using "F16 fighter bombers, helicopter and naval gun-ships, missiles and bombs of heavy tonnage" in "all-out conventional warfare" against a defenceless population.³⁵

In this 'all-out war', the Sharon government claimed that it was fighting the same terror that the United States was fighting in Afghanistan in response to the September 11 tragedy, a preposterous claim, but a convenient pretext to blame the victim. As an Israeli writer recognized: "Israel defines its military action as a necessary defence against terrorism. But in fact, the first Palestinian terrorist attack [of the second *Intifada*] on Israeli civilians inside Israel occurred on November 2, 2000. That was after a month during which Israel used its full military arsenal against civilians, including live bullets, automatic guns, combat helicopters, tanks, and missiles . . . After two years of brutal Israeli oppression of the Palestinians, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the leading military and political circles in Israel . . . still believe that 'the second half' [of the 1948 war] – a completion of the ethnic cleansing that started in 1948 – is necessary and possible."³⁶

Following Israeli leaders' refusal to allow a United Nations investigation into the Israeli army's assaults against Palestinian refugee camps in Jenin in March and April 2002, Amnesty International launched its own investigation. Its report, published on November 4, 2002, and entitled "Israel and the Occupied Territories: Shielded from Scrutiny – IDF [Israeli Defence Forces] violations in Jenin and Nablus" concluded that "there is clear evidence that some of the acts committed by the IDF during Operation Defensive Shield were war crimes".³⁷

The Amnesty International report documented "serious human rights violations by Israeli forces – unlawful killings; torture and

ill-treatment of prisoners; wanton destruction of hundreds of homes sometimes with the residents still inside; the blocking of ambulances and denial of humanitarian assistance; and the use of Palestinian civilians as ‘human shields’. Following meetings with the IDF in May to discuss IDF actions and strategies, Amnesty International submitted most of the individual cases included in the report to the IDF for comment but, despite promises to answer on the cases, no response has yet been received.”³⁸

But it was interesting to note that Mr Friedman of the *New York Times* adopted a variation of the Sharon argument linking the war against the Palestinians with the so-called American ‘war against terror’: “A terrible disaster is in the making in the Middle East” he wrote. “What Osama bin Laden failed to achieve on September 11 is now being unleashed by the Israeli–Palestinian war in the West Bank: a clash of civilizations.”³⁹

This is, obviously, not a clash of civilizations. The Palestinians are resisting the Israelis, not because the latter are Jews but because they are occupiers, oppressors and dispossessors. The Palestinians would have resisted all the same had their occupiers, oppressors and dispossessors been Catholics, Anglicans or Muslims. The Israelis, on the other hand, are oppressing and dispossessing the Palestinians because they are not Jewish. Had the Palestinians been Jewish, they would have been entitled by law in Israel to automatic citizenship, political rights, subsidized housing and medical care.

NOTES

- 1 See for instance, Edgar O’Ballance, *The Third Arab–Israeli War* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1972).
- 2 See Anthony Nutting, *Nasser* (London: Constable and Company, 1972), p. 410.
- 3 See William Quandt, *Decade of Decisions: American Foreign Policy Toward the Arab–Israeli Conflict, 1967–1976* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), p. 57.
- 4 Jon Kimche, *There Could Have Been Peace* (New York: The Dial Press, 1973), p. 258.
- 5 E. H. Hutchinson [a UN observer from the United States], *Violent Truce* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1956), cited by David Hirst in *The Gun and the Olive Branch* (London: Faber & Faber, 1984), p. 182.
- 6 Ralph Crow, “Zionism and the American Press: Is there Bias?”, *Middle East Forum*, XXXII, no. 3, 195, pp. 78–82.

- 7 Robert Friedman, "Selling Israel to America: The Hasbara Project Targets the US Media", *Mother Jones*, February/March 1987.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 See Rogan, Eugene and Avi Shlaim (eds.), *The War for Palestine: Rewriting the History of 1948* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
- 10 Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987).
- 11 Usamah Halabi, Aron Turner and Meron Benvenisti, *Land Alienation in the West Bank: A Legal and Spatial Analysis* (Jerusalem: West Bank Data Base Project, 1985), quoted in the *Washington Post*, reprinted in the *Guardian Weekly*, April 7, 1985.
- 12 Ian Black in the *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, March 23, 1986.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 See Benny Morris, "Operation Dani and the Palestinian Exodus from Lydda and Ramle in 1948", *The Middle East Journal*, vol. 40, no. 1, winter 1986, p. 91.
- 15 See Suzy Hansen, "Beyond tribalism", *Salon.com*, December 8, 2001.
- 16 *Haaretz*, April 4, 1969.
- 17 Interview with Amy Goodman of Public Radio, *Democracy Now*, Feb 19, 2006.
- 18 See Adel Safty, *From Camp David to the Gulf Negotiations, Language and Propaganda and War* (Montreal and New York: Black Rose Books, 1992, 1997).
- 19 Human Rights Watch, www.hrw.org, New York, June 23, 2001.
- 20 See Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987).
- 21 See Adel Safty, *From Camp David to the Gulf*, op. cit.
- 22 The *Vancouver Sun* (Vancouver, Canada), April 2, 1988.
- 23 The *Province*, (Vancouver, Canada), March 27, 1988.
- 24 The *Province*, April 17, 1988.
- 25 See Adel Safty, *From Camp David to the Gulf*, op. cit.
- 26 See Jan Egeland, "Lessons from Norwegian Peace Facilitation in the Middle East" in Adel Safty, *Leadership and Conflict Resolution* (Eastern Mediterranean University Press, 2000; Florida: Universal Publishers, 2002), pp. 67–80.
- 27 See Peter R. Mitchell and John Schoeffel (eds.), *Understanding Power: The Indispensable Chomsky* (New York: The New Press, 2002), p. 174.
- 28 See Muhsin Awad [in Arabic], *The Israeli Strategy of 'Normalization' with the Arab Countries* (Beirut: The Centre for Studies in Arabic Unity, 1988).
- 29 The *New York Times*, February 3, 2002.
- 30 The *New York Times*, March 31, 2002.
- 31 The *New York Times*, April 2, 2002.
- 32 The *New York Times*, July 8, 2001.
- 33 The *New York Times*, March 30, 2002.
- 34 The *New York Times*, March 30, 2002.
- 35 The *New York Times*, March 19, 2002.
- 36 Z.Net Interview with Tanya Reinhart, November 2002.
- 37 Amnesty International, November 4, 2002, <http://web.amnesty.org/ai.nsf/recent/MDE151432002!Open>.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 The *New York Times*, April 3, 2002.

The Arab–Israeli Conflict from 2001

The Israeli Wall of Separation

In 1923, fascist Zionist leader Vladimir Jabotinsky expressed what would become the dominant feature of applied, if not publicly acknowledged, Zionist strategy. In an article entitled “The Iron Wall”, Jabotinsky preached that force was the only way to overcome Arab resistance to the Zionist project of transforming Palestine into a Jewish state, and that Zionists must “erect an iron wall of Jewish military force”.

Ariel Sharon came to power in 2001 determined to defiantly pursue the ‘iron wall policy’ preached by Jabotinsky, and generally accepted by Zionist leaders. Sharon’s first priority, as recognized by Yossi Beilin, Israeli Justice Minister in the Barak government, was “to terminate the peace process”.¹

According to the leading Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth*, the same night Sharon was elected, February 6, 2001, he called Professor Arnon Sofer, a geographer at Haifa University who had been warning against the “the Arab demographic danger”. Sofer was asked to bring along maps, which he had shown at an earlier conference attended by Sharon. Sofer had argued that the state of Israel should unilaterally set its own borders to defend itself against the twin dangers of a negotiated settlement and a future Arab majority in historic Palestine. Sofer’s maps split the West Bank into three cantons, one from Jenin to Ramallah, a second from Bethlehem to Hebron, and a third around the city of Jericho. An electric fence was to separate the three cantons. The wall, which Sharon was to begin constructing, is, according to Sofer, “exactly my map”.²

As if to confirm the fear of the Arab ‘demographic bomb’, the Israeli Knesset passed, on 29 August, 2003, a law further institutionalizing discrimination against the Palestinians. The law provided that: “In case of marriage between an Israeli and a Palestinian from the occupied territories, the spouse will not be allowed to come into Israel.”

Ron Nahman, the Mayor of Jewish settlement Ariel, asserted that the separation plan had been in existence for a long time: “. . . the map of the fence, the sketch of which you see here, is the same map I saw during every visit Arik [Sharon] made here since 1978. He told me he has been thinking about it since 1973.”³

David Levy, the Head of the Jordan Valley Council, expressed satisfaction that the wall was “a political statement, a statement of annexing the Jordan Valley under cover of the ‘security fence’.”⁴

The leading Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth* added: “There are some who call this plan of Sharon’s ‘the bantustan plan’ [according to *Ha’aretz*, Sharon used this term when talking to the former Prime Minister of Italy four years ago], there are those who call it the canton plan. But it is clear that this plan is now taking on concrete and barbed wire. Only now it is called the seamline plan.”⁵

The Israeli Wall is likely to stretch for 650 kilometres and in some places reach a height of 8 metres (by comparison the Berlin Wall was 155km long and 3.6m high). Professor Neve Gordon from Ben-Gurion University estimated that if the current project is completed “50 percent of the West Bank will be annexed to Israel, and there will be no possibility of creating a viable Palestinian state”.⁶

UN Requests World Court Opinion

On December 8, 2003, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution ES-10/14 requesting an urgent advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague on the legality of Israel’s construction of a wall separating the West Bank from Israel. When completed the Wall would incorporate substantial portions of occupied Palestinian land into Israel. The question before the ICJ was whether or not the encroachment of the Wall on occupied Palestinian territories was a violation of international law. Israel denied that the ICJ had jurisdiction to give an opinion, and the Bush and Blair governments supported the Israeli position.

The United Nations had already confirmed the illegality of the Israeli action. In his November 28, 2003 report, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated that the Wall “is not in compliance” with UN General Assembly Resolution ES-10/13, adopted by a vote of 144–4 on October 21, 2003, demanding that Israel halt its construction activities and dismantle the existing parts of the Wall.

Both the UN General Assembly Resolution on the Wall and the UN Security Council Draft Resolution 980, which was vetoed by the US, stated that the Wall is “contrary to relevant provisions of international law”. The Fourth Geneva Convention provides that appropriation of property can amount to a “grave breach” and is therefore a war crime. It also forbids (Article 49) population transfer into occupied land. The Israeli settlement policy has resulted in the transfer of 400,000 Jewish settlers to occupied Palestinian lands.

UN Commission on Human Rights Special Rapporteur John Dugard stated in his September 8, 2003 Report that Jewish settlements “in East Jerusalem and the West Bank are the principal beneficiaries of the Wall and it is estimated that approximately half of the 400,000 settler population will be incorporated on the Israeli side of the Wall”.

The UN report states that over 200,000 “Palestinians living between the Wall and the Green Line will be effectively cut off from their farmlands and workplaces, schools, health clinics and other social services.” This is confirmed by B’Tselem, a leading Israeli human rights group, which submitted that the Wall is an infringement of the right to freedom of movement, the right to work and the right to property of at least 210,000 Palestinians living in 67 villages and towns.

The UN report concluded that the “evidence strongly suggests that Israel is determined to create facts on the ground amounting to de facto annexation”, which it described as “conquest in international law, . . . prohibited by the Charter of the United Nations”.

Another UN report (UNRWA, July 2003) describes how the Israeli military dropped letters in Palestinian villages on the Zbuba side of the Green Line saying that land would be confiscated on orders from “a high level” which could not be altered. Villagers had to show proper deed titles to their own land to apply for compensation to the Ministry of Defence. The villagers rejected the Israeli offer. On March 10, 2003, the UNRWA report stated: “the bulldozers arrived to begin leveling land and orchards”.

An Israeli military order dated and effective October 2, 2003 declared all Occupied West Bank territories between the ‘security’ Wall and Israel’s pre-1967 lines as a ‘closed Zone’. The Order required Palestinians to obtain permits to continue to live in their own homes and to farm their own lands. It also forbade Palestinians from other areas from entering the zone, but this ban did not apply to Israelis or to Jews from anywhere in the world. This means that Muslim and Christian Palestinians living

in their own country are banned from moving freely in it, while Jews from anywhere in the world are given the privilege denied to the Palestinians.

Such blatant discrimination would be intolerable in Western democracies, but is tolerated in the ‘only democracy in the Middle East’, as standard Western media and scholarship like to describe Israel.

Israel High Court Decision on the Wall

On June 30, 2004, the Israeli High Court delivered its decision in the *Beit Sourik v. Israel* case. It ordered the state of Israel and its military commanders to change the route of the Wall that was being constructed in the Occupied West Bank. The High Court recognized that the Occupant might, according to the law of belligerent occupation, confiscate private property and use public property for military purposes, but stated that the Occupant might not do so for political reasons, nor in order to annex territories or fix future borders. The Court cited the *Duikat* case (*HCJ. Duikat v. Israel*) in which the High Court held that the building of Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories for political and ideological reasons was contrary to the law of belligerent occupation. It is noteworthy here that the state of Israel has since modified its official position and has since been saying that settlement construction in the occupied territories was a military necessity.

International Court of Justice Finds Wall Illegal

On July 9, 2004, the International Court of Justice issued its Advisory Opinion on the legal consequences arising from Israel’s construction of the Wall. First, it unanimously upheld its jurisdiction to give an advisory opinion, and dismissed the allegation made by Israel and its supporters that the Court had no jurisdiction in the matter. It then, by 14 votes to 1 (with the American judge the only dissenting vote), found that there were no compelling reasons preventing it from ruling that Israel’s building of the Wall in the “Occupied Palestinian Territory” (including in and around East Jerusalem) violated various international obligations binding on Israel. It also ruled that the wall must be dismantled immediately and Israel must make reparation for any damage caused.

Interestingly, the Court also clearly established the illegality of the Jewish settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories including East

Jerusalem: “the wall’s sinuous route has been traced in such a way as to include within that area the great majority of Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (including East Jerusalem)”, the International Court of Justice added, “the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (including East Jerusalem) have been established in breach of international law”.

On July 20, 2004, the United Nations General Assembly voted 150–6 to endorse the International Court of Justice’s opinion.

Yet, the Israeli government continued to use the Wall and its route as an excuse to confiscate more land and expand more settlements. The Israeli human rights organization B’Tselem issued a report in which it documented Israeli expansion of illegal settlements.

“The fact that the Separation Barrier cuts into the West Bank”, the report stated, was and remains the main cause of human rights violations of Palestinians living near the Barrier. Israel contends that the Barrier’s route is based solely on security considerations. This report disputes that contention and proves that one of the primary reasons for choosing the route of many sections of the Barrier was to place certain areas intended for settlement expansion on the ‘Israeli’ side of the Barrier. In some of the cases, for all intents and purposes the expansion constituted the establishment of a new settlement.

“The settlements that Israel established in the Occupied Territories are illegal and breach international humanitarian law. Therefore, an act intended to perpetuate the settlements is by definition, a breach of international law.”⁷

The Roadmap to More Dispossession

Under pressure from British Prime Minister Tony Blair – anxious to show that the Anglo-American war against Iraq was part of an overall comprehensive settlement of the Middle East – US President George W. Bush outlined, in April 2003, “his vision” of a two-state solution for the Palestine conflict in the proposals that came to be known as the roadmap. The European Union, Russia and the United Nations endorsed the plan, which was officially launched in June 2003, shortly after the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq. In November 2003, a unanimously adopted UN Security Council resolution gave the roadmap the backing of the international community and legal validity. However, Bush showed

no commitment to enforcing the implementation of 'his vision', especially in the face of a recalcitrant ally like Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Sharon, however, wanted the Palestinians, not him, to be seen as rejecting the roadmap, especially at a time when Palestinians and Israelis were successfully promoting a non-official rival peace plan known as the Geneva Agreement, which received mild endorsement from then US Secretary of State Colin Powell.

The Palestinian Authority was implementing the legislative reforms demanded of it, condemning suicide bombings, and rebuilding a security apparatus largely destroyed by Sharon who, at the same time, was forever blaming Arafat for not making effective use of it.

The Geneva Agreement and the Palestinian readiness for political dialogue presented Sharon with a classic dilemma, well known to previous Zionist leaders: accept peace now and settle for an incomplete Zionist project, or reject peace and continue the conquest of Palestine by force. Sharon, like Ben-Gurion and other Zionist leaders before him, opted for the use of force to torpedo the threat of premature peace.

As Israeli writer Uzi Benziman pointed out, Sharon's strategy was to violently provoke Palestinian retaliations and use them as an excuse to justify his rejection of a negotiated political settlement.⁸

The roadmap specifically stipulated that Israelis and Palestinians would "reach a final and comprehensive settlement status agreement that ends the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in 2005, through a settlement negotiated between the parties based on UNSCR 242, 338 and 1397, that ends the occupation that began in 1967, and includes an agreed, just, fair and realistic solution to the refugee issue".

Sharon never accepted the roadmap. When US Secretary of State Collin Powell tried to secure Israel's acceptance of the roadmap in May 2003, Sharon presented him with no less than fourteen reservations. The roadmap required that Israel "immediately dismantle settlement outposts erected since March 2001 . . . [and] freezes all settlement activity, including natural growth of settlements".

Sharon defiantly ignored the roadmap obligation of freezing the construction of Jewish settlements, and proceeded to accelerate Palestinian land confiscation and the building of Jewish colonies in the occupied Palestinian territories. Sharon wanted American financing but had no intention of freezing settlement construction. On June 22, 2003, he explained his strategy to his cabinet: "Settlements can be built, but there

is no need to talk about it and come out dancing every time a building permit is given. Let them build but without talking.”⁹

In August 2003, Israel’s Housing Minister, Effi Eitam, announced plans to direct “state resources for building many homes in East Jerusalem in order to attract thousands of Jews, with the aim of foiling a dividing of . . . [Jerusalem] by creating . . . Jewish settlement contiguity in East Jerusalem”. Israel’s Social-Economic Committee has also approved a programme of subsidies and grants to expand the settler population in the Jordan Valley.¹⁰

Israeli government figures show that 35% more building was undertaken in settlements in 2003, the year of the roadmap, than the year before and that work began on about 1,850 new settler homes in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Bush administration expressed its displeasure with the continuing settlement activity by deducting less than \$300 million from the \$11 billion in loan guarantees for Israel. The symbolic gesture had no effect. When the UN Security Council unanimously adopted, in November 2003, a resolution giving international backing to the roadmap, Israeli Ambassador Arye Mekeel said: “We do not believe that the key thing now is additional resolutions or statements, there have been plenty of those . . .”¹¹

On December 18, 2003, Sharon made a speech repudiating the roadmap and blaming its failure on the Palestinians. After the speech, Gush Shalom, an Israeli peace movement, stated: “Ariel Sharon’s speech of today is a masterpiece of misrepresentation, half-truths and outright lies . . . The polished formulations are hiding the clear intent of annexing more than half the West Bank, while giving up a few far-away and isolated settlements that the army considers as a burden.”¹² Even the Bush administration took a negative view of Sharon’s repudiation of the roadmap. White House spokesman Scott McClellan said: “The US believes a settlement must be negotiated and we would oppose any unilateral Israeli effort to impose a settlement.”¹³

But instead of Washington pressuring Tel Aviv, it was in fact Sharon who managed to pressure Bush. By February 12, the Bush administration, in what the *New York Times* described as “a major shift of policy on the Middle East”, had reversed its position and agreed to undermine its own internationally-backed plan by supporting the Sharon plan.¹⁴

On March 15, 2004, Sharon sought and received parliamentary approval for his plan for unilateral disengagement from Gaza, spelling

the end of the roadmap, which specifically obligated the parties not to engage in any unilateral actions. Sharon's plan was negotiated, not with Palestinians, but between Israelis and Americans. Their negotiations focused on the 'compensations' Washington would provide to Sharon to undermine Washington's own roadmap.

Washington assured Sharon that Israel would not have to withdraw to the 'green line' in a future settlement. In other words, the United States accepted Israeli annexation of additional Palestinian territories. This violated the principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territories by war confirmed in UN Security Council Resolution 242, which the roadmap specifically used as the basis for a negotiated settlement.

The Bush administration also pledged to support the return of the Palestinian refugees to an independent and sovereign Palestinian state. This meant that it did not support their return to their homes and lands in what used to be Palestine and is today Israel. This not only violated UN Resolution 194 of 1948, reiterated annually, about the Palestinian right of return, it also breached the roadmap principle of a negotiated "just, fair and a realistic solution to the refugee issue".

The Bush administration also dropped its opposition to the Israeli Wall. The route, which was approved by the Sharon government on October 1, 2003 would not be altered, but it would now be defined as a 'vision' to be realized in the future, stage by stage. This contradicted Sharon's protestations that the Wall was "a temporary measure". If it is a vision to be realized in the future, it cannot be a temporary reality to be eliminated in the future. Washington also renounced the idea of deducting the cost of the construction of the Wall from American loan guarantees to Israel. In effect, Washington agreed to finance the Wall, which the UN and the International Court of Justice said was against international law.

Remarkably enough, the Bush administration promoted, not its own roadmap, but the Sharon Plan, claiming that an Israeli withdrawal from some of the settlements in the territories could restart the peace process in the Middle East. Sharon himself did not make that claim. He knew better. He told Israeli news organizations that his plan "would rule out a Palestinian state". "These steps of ours will harm the Palestinians severely," he told the Israeli paper *Maariv* in early April 2004. "It will bring their dreams to an end. When you fence in regions and settlements with fences, you end a lot of their dreams . . ." ¹⁵

In supporting the Sharon Plan for unilateral disengagement from Gaza, Bush brought himself closer to Sharon and further away from his own roadmap. Bush said the Sharon Plan was consistent with the roadmap. In fact, it is not. Sharon certainly knew it was not, and Bush ought to have known it too.

Sharon Aid Admits Ploy to Freeze Roadmap

Dov Weisglass, Sharon's aide, admitted with a sense of self-congratulatory satisfaction that Sharon managed to kill the political process for a peaceful settlement. In an interview with the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, Weisglass said that the Geneva Peace Agreement, negotiated by non-official Israelis and Palestinians, was gathering pace, and a growing number of Israeli officers were refusing to serve in the Occupied Territories, and that pressure was gathering on Sharon to do something. Sharon put forward his plan to disengage from Gaza. It enabled him to appear to be doing something for peace, while continuing to blame the Palestinians with Bush's blessings, and at the same time ensuring the end of the American-backed peace plan known as the road map.

"The disengagement plan", he told the Israeli paper, "makes it possible for Israel to park conveniently in an interim situation that distances us as far as possible from political pressure."¹⁶

Weisglass then took pride in the unique support Sharon extracted from the Bush administration for the confiscation of Palestinian land and the preservation of the Jewish settlements built on it: "On the other hand, in regard to the large settlement blocs, thanks to the disengagement plan, we have in our hands a first-ever American statement that they will be part of Israel. In years to come, perhaps decades, when negotiations will be held between Israel and the Palestinians, the master of the world will pound on the table and say: we stated already ten years ago that the large blocs are part of Israel." He added that Sharon "can say honestly that this is a serious move because of which, out of 240,000 settlers, 190,000 will not be moved from their place. Will not be moved."¹⁷

"The significance", said Weisglass, "is the freezing of the political process. And when you freeze that process you prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state and you prevent a discussion about the refugees, the borders and Jerusalem." And if the message was not clear enough, Weisglass explained further: "Effectively, this whole package that is called

the Palestinian state, with all that it entails, has been removed from our agenda indefinitely. And all this with authority and permission. All with a presidential blessing and the ratification of both houses of Congress. What more could have been anticipated? What more could have been given to the settlers?”¹⁸

Killing Civilians and Children

On September 28, 2004, the Israeli army launched another attack against the Palestinians in Gaza with full fury. The UN Agency in Gaza filed a report on October 20, which stated in its introduction:

Late on 28 September 2004 large numbers of Israeli Defence Force (IDF) tanks, bulldozers and armoured personnel carriers moved into Northern Gaza from permanent bases in Nissanit settlement, Erez Industrial Zone and the Eastern Border, tearing up roads and flattening homes and crops as they pushed forward . . .

Over the next 17 days the IDF remained in control of Northern Gaza. An estimated 200 armoured vehicles were on the ground in towns, villages and densely populated refugee camps, launching regular raids into civilian areas, firing on Palestinian targets from the air and ground, sealing off Palestinian neighbourhoods and restricting movement of civilians and humanitarian/emergency relief workers. Large swathes of agricultural land were levelled and there was widespread damage to public and private property – homes, schools, commercial interests – and public infrastructure.

IDF bulldozers dug deep trenches across several main roads, severing sewage, water and electricity lines. During the operation, approximately 36,000 Palestinians in different locations, including Beit Hanoun (22,000 persons), Izbet Beit Hanoun (5,000 persons), the areas east of Sikka St and Salah Eddin St (2,500 persons), Nada and Awda towers (2,500 persons) and parts of Jabalia camp (4,000 persons) were under siege. Many thousands of civilians were unable to leave their homes, as fighting raged around them. An additional 4,000 persons fled their homes in the affected areas.

The stated aim of the IDF operation was to prevent the firing of home-made Palestinian rockets into the Israeli town of Sderot. These have killed four Israeli citizens in recent months. At the time of the IDF redeployment on 15 October over 100 Palestinians had been killed, including 27 children, and over 400 injured. Operation Days of Penitence was the largest IDF incursion into Gaza since the start of the Al-Aqsa intifada in September 2000.

According to data collected by UNRWA's Field Security Office, 107 Palestinians were killed and 431 injured during Operation

Days of Penitence. This is the number of confirmed casualties and is likely to rise. Tank shells and helicopter missiles, fired into densely populated areas, caused many of the casualties. A quarter of those killed (27) were aged 18 years and under. Five Israelis were killed during the same period.

The dead include nine UNRWA pupils from six schools and two teachers.¹⁹

There has been growing evidence to suggest that the Israeli army, regularly defended in the West by Israel's apologists for its purity of arms and care about human lives, has shown disregard for the lives of innocent children.

Israeli journalist Amira Hass reported in her *Haaretz* interview of November 20, 2000, an elicited admission from an Israeli soldier about Israeli army orders to sharpshooters to shoot children twelve and over.²⁰ Distinguished American journalist Chris Hedges witnessed and reported on the killing of Palestinian children by Israeli soldiers shortly after the eruption of the second Palestinian *Intifada*.²¹

During a subsequent Israeli re-invasion of Gaza, the execution in Rafah of a thirteen year-old refugee schoolgirl named Iman al-Hams by an Israeli platoon commander after he saw she had been wounded quickly became the subject of an army cover up. The captain who committed the murder was found not to have committed an 'unethical act'. Courageous soldiers from the same company went to the mass circulation Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth* and testified that the killing had been in cold blood: "a soldier in the watchtower identified Iman and cautioned his commander shouting, "Don't shoot. It's a little girl." The company commander, the soldiers testified "approached her, shot two bullets into her [head], walked back towards the force, turned back to her, switched his weapon to automatic and emptied his entire magazine into her".²²

Israeli television played the following recorded radio exchanges between soldiers involved in the killing of Iman Al-Hams:

RECORD OF A SHOOTING

Watchtower

"It's a little girl. She's running defensively eastward."

Operations room

"Are we talking about a girl under the age of ten?"

Watchtower

"A girl of about 10, she's behind the embankment, scared to death."

Captain R (after killing the girl)

"Anything moving in the zone, even a three-year-old, needs to be killed."

Doctors at Rafah's hospital where Iman's body had been taken said that she had been shot at least seventeen times. The officer was charged with minor infractions.²³

The Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* was led to conclude that: "Apparently the [Israeli] public is accepting a situation in which military activity in Palestinian towns is accompanied by indiscriminate killing."²⁴

Meanwhile, Israeli authorities continued to practise their long-standing policy of house demolitions directed against Palestinians in the Occupied Territories as well as the Arab citizens of the state of Israeli. A 2004 Amnesty International Report documented this illegal practice and pointed out: "More than 3,000 homes, vast areas of agricultural land and hundreds of other properties have been destroyed by the Israeli army and security forces in Israel and the Occupied Territories in the past three and a half years. Tens of thousands of men, women and children have been made homeless or have lost their livelihood. Thousands of other houses have been damaged, and tens of thousands of others are under threat of demolition, their occupants living in fear of homelessness."

"The destruction of Palestinian homes, agricultural land and other property in the Occupied Territories, is inextricably linked to Israel's long-standing policy of appropriating as much as possible of the land it occupies, notably by establishing Israeli settlements in violation of international law. In Israel it is essentially the homes of Palestinian citizens of Israel (Israeli Arabs), which are targeted for demolition."²⁵

As the disengagement plan for Gaza neared its implementation date, house demolition in Gaza increased, with the purpose of driving Palestinians away from the border crossing area with Egypt to allow Israeli military control of the area. Human Rights Watch issued a report, in 2004, in which it stated that: "Israeli armed forces have illegally razed thousands of homes, regardless of military necessity, to clear Palestinians from the Gaza-Egypt border and create a 'buffer zone'."

"Israel's conduct in southern Gaza", said Kenneth Roth, Executive Director of Human Rights Watch, "stems from the assumption that

every Palestinian is a suicide bomber and every home a base for attack. This policy of mass home destruction leads to serious violations of international humanitarian law meant to protect civilians.”²⁶

The almost daily assaults on the Palestinians, targeted assassinations, land confiscation and the Separation Wall creating virtual imprisonment in isolated enclaves, have made life for the Palestinians more intolerable under the ‘peace plan’ than at any other time before. With each ‘peace plan’ the Palestinians are worse off than before. With each ‘peace plan’ they lose a little more of their land. In the absence of Arab strength and American pressure, Israel brought 400,000 Jewish settlers to the occupied West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, all subsidized by American taxpayers during various ‘peace plans’ from the Rogers Plan in 1969 to Oslo in 1993 and finally to the roadmap in 2003.

As Israeli historian Baruch Kimmerling pointed out: “Under Sharon, Israel has become a state oriented towards one major goal: the politicide of the Palestinian people . . . The most commonly used techniques in this process are expropriation of lands and their colonization; restrictions on spatial mobility (curfews, closures, roadblocks); murder; localized massacres; mass detentions; division, or elimination, of leaders and élite groups; hindrance of regular education and schooling; physical destruction of public institutions and infrastructure, private homes and property; starvation; social and political isolation; re-education; and partial or, if feasible, complete ethnic cleansing, although this may not occur as a single dramatic action. The aim of most of these practices is to make life so unbearable that the greatest possible majority of the rival population, especially its élite and middle classes, will leave the area ‘voluntarily’. An alternative goal may be the establishment of a puppet regime – like those of the *Bantustans* – that is completely obedient but provides an illusion of self-determination to the oppressed ethnic or racial community.”²⁷

Thus, the roadmap continues the same familiar and depressing pattern: responding to some escalation in violence or international pressure, Washington proposes a ‘peace plan’ and then, responding to domestic policy considerations, fails to enforce it, thus encouraging Israeli intransigence, oppression and continued dispossession of the Palestinians.

Blaming Arafat

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's death, in November 2004, gave rise to widespread recognition around the world of the enormous contributions he had made to the Palestinian cause. British Prime Minister Tony Blair called him "a huge icon for his people". The prestigious French newspaper *Le Monde* called him "Le dernier des fedayins", the last of the freedom fighters. The Israeli peace bloc Gush Shalom referred to him as the "Father of the Nation". Even former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres called him "the voice and symbol of the Palestinian cause".²⁸

By contrast, many in the American media made the often-repeated allegation that Arafat's death opened new windows of opportunities for peace in the Middle East, because Arafat was allegedly an obstacle to peace, as Sharon and Bush repeatedly maintained. Judith Miller, the reporter who helped spread the misleading claims of the *New York Times* about Iraqi weapons of mass destruction for which the *New York Times* subsequently apologized, gave this typical Israeli-influenced assessment of Arafat: "In 2000, after rejecting a land-for-peace deal from Israel . . . Mr Arafat presided over the Palestinians as they waged a mix of guerrilla warfare and terror against Israeli troops and civilians."²⁹

Israeli historian Benny Morris, who documented the Israeli use of terror and massacres to expel Palestinians from their homeland in 1947–49, but who has now regrettably become an advocate of ethnic cleansing, expressed similar views about Arafat: "Mr. Arafat [believed] that all of Palestine belonged rightfully to the Palestinians and that Jewish claims lacked any legitimacy. That was why he turned down the peace proposals of Mr Barak in July 2000."³⁰

US Democratic Senator Hillary Clinton, who once expressed sympathy for the Palestinians when she was First Lady, but who, as a senator from New York, found it expedient to support the hawkish Israeli views, legitimized the same distortions. On Wednesday, November 17, CNN Television talkshow host Larry King asked her: "Why did Arafat walk away from the deal that your husband brokered in 2000?" Senator Clinton replied: "Who knows? He [Arafat] was living in a time warp."

There is validity to criticisms about the accumulation of power and corruption in his administration and his failings in this respect have done the Palestinians no good. Palestinian discontent was expressed at the polls and in the legislative elections that took place in January 2006 when the Hamas movement won in a landslide victory.

But it is remarkable that views such as those quoted above about the supposed ‘generous offer’ that Arafat would not accept from Barak, dominate American politics and the American media, despite the readily available evidence to the contrary from American and Israeli sources. Robert Malley, an assistant to President Clinton, and a member of the US peace team at the Camp David summit, wrote: “Strictly speaking, there never was an Israeli offer . . . The ideas put forward at Camp David were never stated in writing, but orally conveyed. They generally were presented as US concepts, not Israeli ones.” It was Israeli Prime Minister Barak who reneged on the promises of withdrawal he had made to Clinton and Arafat.³¹

Arafat had in fact already made a historic concession when he negotiated the Oslo Agreement in 1993. He accepted a settlement that confined a future Palestinian state to the West Bank and Gaza – that is 22% of historic Palestine – and recognized the legitimacy of Israel in 78% of Palestine. This in fact subverted the UN Palestine Partition Resolution of 1947 which gave juridical, if not moral, legitimacy, to the establishment of two states in Palestine, a Jewish one in some 55% of historic Palestine and an Arab Palestinian state in the remaining 45%.

The fact that Arafat made historic concessions at Oslo is openly recognized by historian and former Israeli Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami who told the American Public Radio programme *Democracy Now* that in Oslo Arafat “made enormous concessions”. Ben-Ami elaborated: “. . . Arafat in Oslo reached an Agreement that didn’t even mention the right of self-determination for the Palestinians, doesn’t even mention the need of the Israelis to put an end to settlements. If the Israelis, after Oslo, continued expansion of settlements, they were violating the spirit of Oslo, not the letter of Oslo. There is nothing in the Oslo Agreement that says that Israelis cannot build settlements. So this was the cheap agreement that Arafat sold . . .” The way former Israeli Prime Minister Itzhak Rabin saw it, according to Ben-Ami, was that the PLO would be Israel’s subcontractor and collaborator in the Occupied Territories.³²

At Camp David, Barak expected in fact to extract more concessions from Arafat on the remaining 22% of Palestine by demanding that Israel retain a further 9% of the West Bank in return for Israeli territory equivalent to 1% of the West Bank. He also expected Arafat to agree to a Palestinian state divided into four separate areas surrounded and

controlled by Israel: the Northern West Bank, the Central West Bank, the Southern West Bank and Gaza.

Movement of people and goods, and therefore control over people and the economy, within 'independent' Palestine would be subject to Israeli control. Since the proposal also called for Israel to control the Palestinian borders, the overall effect would have been to transform the militarily occupied territories into a different form of controlled satellite state, possibly with less autonomy than that enjoyed by the Bantustans in apartheid South Africa. The proposal also called on Arafat to recognize the legitimacy of the illegal Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem and offered no more than Palestinian sovereignty over Arab quarters transformed into ghettos, again divided and surrounded by Israeli settlements and separated from the Palestinian state. When Arafat demurred, he was blamed as an obstacle to 'peace', even by Clinton, despite the American President's assurances to Arafat that there would be no finger pointing.

In fact, Arafat told the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* that he was ready to accept a reasonable compromise that did not return all of the West Bank and Gaza to the Palestinians, and did not guarantee the return of all the refugees to Israel, but one which gave the Palestinians a viable basis for the establishment of a truly independent state. The Israeli paper reported: "Arafat is ready to sign an agreement that would give Palestinians 97 per cent of the West Bank and Gaza – with the rest in a land swap, and the right of return of not all, but at least some refugees." Arafat also made reference to an Arab League proposal which was put forward by Saudi Arabia. The Palestinians, like other Arab states, had accepted it. They had also accepted, he went on to state, various other American diplomatic initiatives: the Tenet Report, the Zinni mission and the Mitchell Report.³³

Dr Shlomo Ben-Ami, who was a member of the Israeli delegation at Camp David, candidly and categorically admitted that: "Camp David was not the missed opportunity for the Palestinians, and if I were a Palestinian I would have rejected Camp David, as well."³⁴

With regard to the claim that Arafat was behind the outbreak of the Palestinian uprising that erupted in response to Ariel Sharon's provocative visit to Al-Aqsa mosque, the available evidence suggests that Arafat had no role in it. Israeli military officer Emmanuel Sivan stated in *Haaretz* that interrogation of Palestinian activists arrested at the beginning of the second Palestinian uprising in September 2000 confirmed "clearly

that during the 10 days following Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount, the disturbances were utterly spontaneous" as a response to Sharon's "arrogantly trampling the sanctity of Islam underfoot".³⁵

While publicly claiming to adhere to the roadmap for peace in the Middle East, Israeli leaders continued to confiscate Palestinian land and build new settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The Israeli organization Peace Now reported that 12,000 new residents moved into Israeli settlements in the West Bank in 2005.

The hypocrisy of the Bush administration and the Israeli government was exposed when the *New York Times* reported, following the January 2006 landslide victory in Palestinian legislative elections of Hamas, that the Americans and Israelis were secretly preparing plans to undermine a Hamas government and bring about its collapse. This news led the editors of the *Times* to rhetorically ask: "Is it really possible to expect that more punishment from the Israelis and the Americans, this time for not voting the way we wanted them to, would lead them to abandon Hamas?"³⁶

Former US President Jimmy Carter, who observed the election in Palestine, rejected the American-Israeli collusion to undermine the democratically elected Hamas government. In an article in the *Washington Post* he pointed out the obvious: "This common commitment [by Israel and the United States] to eviscerate the government of elected Hamas officials by punishing private citizens may accomplish this narrow purpose, but the likely results will be to alienate the already oppressed and innocent Palestinians, to incite violence, and to increase the domestic influence and international esteem of Hamas." Carter also pointedly recognized that "The election of Hamas candidates cannot adversely affect genuine peace talks, since such talks have been nonexistent for over five years."³⁷

The 2006 Israeli Election: More of the Same

Observers and political commentators have asserted that the March 2006 Israeli election produced a totally different political landscape: a Moroccan-born leader for the Labour party, a new political party (Kadima), the former Labour leader Shimon Peres defecting to join the Kadima party, and general apathy on the part of Israeli-Arab voters.

This may be a new landscape for the Israelis, but for the Palestinians it promises to be more of the same: continued dispossession, collective

punishment, the continued denial of Palestinian fundamental rights and the bad faith inherent in proclaiming a commitment to peace while working to block its realization.

The new Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, confirmed his commitment to the Sharon vision of brute force and the imposition of unilateral solutions. This is in total defiance of the international community's consensus, including that of the United States, for the need for a negotiated settlement, freely arrived at, to end the occupation and establish an independent and viable Palestinian state.

In his March 10, 2006 interview with the Israeli media, Olmert presented his plan to unilaterally set the Israeli borders in such a way as to incorporate the large Jewish settlement blocs Ariel, Ma'aleh Adumim, Gush Etzion and the Old City and adjacent neighbourhoods in occupied Arab Jerusalem.

Under the Olmert plan, Israel would also keep military control over the Jordan Valley. "Our security borders", Olmert said, "will be along the Jordan. There are strategic considerations for this that we cannot relinquish."

When asked if he intended to build between Jerusalem and Ma'aleh Adumim despite US objections, Olmert said: "Of course. After all, it is unthinkable that we will talk about Ma'aleh Adumim as part of the State of Israel and leave it like an island."³⁸

The plan preserves the Jewish character of the Israeli state by keeping the Palestinians of the West Bank out, expropriating more of their land, while preventing them from having a viable and sovereign state, and making them subject to Israeli siege at short notice.

It is therefore disingenuous on the part of Olmert and the Bush administration to demand that the new Palestinian government commit itself to the roadmap for peace. The roadmap required that Israel "immediately dismantle settlement outposts erected since March 2001 . . . [and] freeze all settlement activity".

The reality, however, is that the building of settlements and consolidation of existing ones has never stopped. As we have previously mentioned, according to the Israeli group Peace Now, 12,000 new Jewish settlers moved into West Bank settlements in 2005, and construction of new settlements continues apace.

A report by the Israeli human rights group B'Tselem published in December 2005, found that the route of the Wall, declared illegal by the

International Court of Justice in July 2004, leaves “fifty-five settlements, twelve of them in East Jerusalem, separated from the rest of the West Bank and contiguous with the State of Israel”.

The Israel Lobby and US Foreign Policy in the Middle East

In the run-up to the 2003 war in Iraq, US neo-conservatives and the Israel lobby led the war party, unashamedly calling not only for war against Iraq, but for regime change in Syria, Iran and Saudi Arabia as well.

However, there were some dissenting voices that questioned whether a war to serve Israel’s designs in the Middle East would really serve American interests. Perhaps none was more forceful in his criticism than former presidential candidate Patrick Buchanan. Writing in the *American Conservative*, Buchanan was unsparing in his accusations:

We charge that a cabal of polemicists and public officials seek to ensnare our country in a series of wars that are not in America’s interests. We charge them with colluding with Israel to ignite those wars and destroy the Oslo Accords. We charge them with deliberately damaging US relations with every state in the Arab world that defies Israel or supports the Palestinian people’s right to a homeland of their own.³⁹

And from within the Bush administration itself, Philip Zelikow, a former member of the President’s Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, admitted that the ‘real threat’ from Iraq was not a threat to the United States, but a threat to Israel. He said the government could not say so publicly because “it is not popular to sell”.⁴⁰

After the invasion and occupation of Iraq, some American lawmakers started to accuse the administration of waging the war on behalf of Israel. Senator Ernest Hollings, writing in the *Charleston Post and Courier*, more than a year after the invasion of Iraq, concluded: “With Iraq no threat, why invade a sovereign country? The answer: President Bush’s policy to secure Israel.”⁴¹

Why would the United States set aside its own security and that of its allies in order to advance the interests of Israel? This is the question two respected scholars, John Mearsheimer from Chicago University, and Stephen Walt from Harvard University, asked in their 2006 article, “The Israel Lobby”.⁴² The two authors then list the many special privileges the

United States has given to Israel and review the arguments advanced by Israel's supporters. Mearsheimer and Walt proceed to destroy these arguments one by one.

Israel is the largest recipient of American aid, about US\$3 billion every year; and it does not have to account for how the aid is used, thus allowing it to divert American tax-payers' money to finance the occupation and the illegal settlements.

Israel is the only country on whose behalf the US has used its veto repeatedly at the UN Security Council, vetoing 32 resolutions that condemned Israeli actions since 1982. Washington also blocks efforts to put Israel's nuclear weapons on the agenda of the UN Atomic Energy Agency.

Washington consistently supported the Israeli position in all Israeli Arab negotiations from the Sinai Agreements in 1974, to Oslo in 1993, and the second Camp David in 2000. Mearsheimer and Walt cite an American participant at the second Camp David who later said: "Far too often, we functioned . . . as Israel's lawyer."

Israel's supporters say all this exceptional support is justified because of the history of Jewish suffering in the West and because Israel is a democracy that shares American values. Israel's supporters also claim that Israel enjoys moral superiority, and exercises restraint in the face of Palestinian violence. They allege that Israel has been a loyal ally and a strategic asset for the United States in the Middle East, as well as a partner in the war on terror.

The establishment of Israel, Mearsheimer and Walt point out, though an appropriate response to the history of Jewish suffering, "also brought about fresh crimes against a largely innocent third party: the Palestinians". "The tragic history of the Jewish people," they write, "does not obligate the US to help Israel today no matter what it does."

To the claims about Israel's moral superiority and restraint in the face of Palestinian provocations, the two professors point out that the forcible establishment of the state of Israel in 1947–48 "involved acts of ethnic cleansing, including executions, massacres and rapes by Jews, and Israel's subsequent conduct has often been brutal, belying any claim to moral superiority".

Mearsheimer and Walt cite revealing statistics: "Between 1949 and 1956, for example, Israeli security forces killed between 2,700 and 5,000 Arab infiltrators, the overwhelming majority of them unarmed. The IDF

murdered hundreds of Egyptian prisoners of war in both the 1956 and 1967 wars, while in 1967, it expelled between 100,000 and 260,000 Palestinians from the newly conquered West Bank, and drove 80,000 Syrians from the Golan Heights.”

To the claim about shared democratic values, the two scholars argue that there are many democracies around the world, but none receives the support Israel gets. In addition, the authors point out, “some aspects of Israeli democracy are at odds with core American values. Unlike the US, where people are supposed to enjoy equal rights irrespective of race, religion or ethnicity, Israel was explicitly founded as a Jewish state and citizenship is based on the principle of blood kinship.”

To the claim that Israel is a strategic asset and a partner on the war on terror, the two authors argue that Israel was useless against the rise of the Islamic revolution in Iran. And it was a liability during the first Gulf War, forcing America to transfer advanced military equipment to Israel to keep it out of the war and preserve the Arab role in the anti-Hussein coalition.

Are Israel and America partners in the war on terror, facing the same enemy? No, say the two writers. “In fact,” they argue, “Israel is a liability in the war on terror and the broader effort to deal with rogue states . . . The relationship with Israel actually makes it harder for the US to deal with these states.”

Mearsheimer and Walt then ask: “. . . if neither strategic nor moral arguments can account for America’s support for Israel, how are we to explain it?” And they answer by saying that the explanation is the “the unmatched power of the Israel Lobby”, of which the American Israeli Political Action Committee (AIPAC) is the most powerful.

“The bottom line, is that AIPAC, a de facto agent for a foreign government, has a stranglehold on Congress, with the result that US policy towards Israel is not debated there, even though that policy has important consequences for the entire world . . . As one former Democratic senator, Ernest Hollings, noted on leaving office, ‘you can’t have an Israeli policy other than what AIPAC gives you around here’.”

The Israel Lobby pursues two strategies, one is to influence Congress and the White House, the other is to stifle critical debate about Israel. One disturbing dimension of the strategy of silencing criticisms of Israel is the effort to get Congress to enact laws to monitor what professors are saying on campus. The other, equally disturbing and far more powerful

strategy of stifling dissent, is the charge of anti-Semitism: “Anyone who criticises Israel’s actions or argues that pro-Israel groups have significant influence over US Middle Eastern policy – an influence AIPAC celebrates – stands a good chance of being labelled an anti-semite.”

The work of the Lobby is facilitated by the large number of Jewish Americans working in the Congress, in the government and in the media, who are sympathetic to the Israeli view. The authors cite the journalist Eric Alterman who writes that the debate among Middle East pundits is “dominated by people who cannot imagine criticising Israel”. He lists “61 columnists and commentators who can be counted on to support Israel reflexively and without qualification”. Conversely, Alterman found “just five pundits who consistently criticize Israeli actions or endorse Arab positions”.

The publication of the study provoked little debate in Washington precisely because, as Mearsheimer and Walt noted, there is no real debate of US Middle Eastern policy in the Congress or in the White House. But the study did provoke some minor debate within academia.

For instance, Professor Joseph Massad of Columbia University argued that the American bias in favour of Israel and against the Palestinians would have existed with or without the lobby, because of America’s traditional opposition to national liberation movements around the world.⁴³ But this argument does not explain why the United States continued its bias against the Palestinians and Arabs even after the PLO stopped being a national liberation movement, recognized Israel, and became, as former Israeli foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami recognized, the collaborators of Israeli forces in the Occupied Territories, suppressing Palestinian nationalist and democratic tendencies.

Professor Michael Neuman from Trent University in Canada, argued that American bias in favour of Israel, especially after the end of the Cold War, is not so much because of the Israel lobby but rather it is the result of government inertia. This means it will take decades for Americans to outgrow their “sentimental attachment to Israel”.⁴⁴

But this does not explain why this ‘government inertia’ remained entrenched in the face of persistent moral outrages: from the massacres of Sabra and Shattila, the horrific bombings of Beirut in 1982, to the breaking of the bones of Palestinian young protestors in the first *Intifada*, and the attack on Jenin and the killing of Palestinian children during the second *Intifada*.

Neuman's argument also does not explain the fact that although opinion polls tell us that a majority of the American people support withholding aid in order to pressure Israel into accepting a peace settlement, the Bush administration has done exactly the opposite: it endorsed the illegal confiscation of Palestinian land and justified crimes against the Palestinians in the same Israeli frame of reference. This active intervention on behalf of Israel, while ignoring the popular sentiment, could not have been the result of 'government inertia' or 'sentimental attachment' to Israel. It was the result of a deliberate choice made politically attractive by the activities of the Israel lobby, however morally imbecilic and strategically incompetent the choice may be.

Among public figures, Congressman Paul Findley's courage in trying to challenge, in the early 1980s, the myths and half-truths which filled the little Middle East policy discussions there were in Washington, brought him the ire of the Israeli lobby; it targeted him in congressional elections and may have been instrumental in bringing about his defeat after a 22-year-long distinguished career in Congress. Findley then wrote *They Dare To Speak Out: People and Institutions Confront Israel's Lobby*, which went on to become a best-seller. In 1993, Findley wrote another book, *Deliberate Deceptions*, which systematically refuted the mythologies about the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict, propagated by Israel and its supporters in the United States.

What is remarkable about the Mearsheimer and Walt study is not so much what it says. Much of it has already been said in Israel by Simha Flapan, Baruch Kimmerling, Benny Morris, Ilan Pappé and others; and in the United States by Alfred Lilienthal, Noam Chomsky, Cheryl Rubenberg, Norman Finklestein, as well as by Arab-American scholars.

The Mearsheimer and Walt study is remarkable because its very publication proved two important points that it made. The authors had said that anyone who dared criticize Israel stood a good chance of being called anti-Semitic. That is exactly what happened. The US media gave ample space to Israel's backers who were quick to vilify Mearsheimer and Walt with the usual charges, with one headline screaming: "Anti-Semitic Paranoia at Harvard" (*Boston Herald Tribune*, April 3).

Secondly, the authors represent Harvard University and Chicago University, venerable symbols of the establishment which, for far too long, ignored the reality of the Palestinian cause. In that sense the authors' concluding statement is both true and ironic: "Powerful states

can maintain flawed policies for quite some time,” they wrote, “but reality cannot be ignored for ever.”

Total War Against Palestine

The celebrated 19th-century Prussian general Carl von Clausewitz described attacks on the enemy’s territory, property and citizens as total war. With the horrors of World War II, total war became associated with war crimes. The Israeli attacks on the Palestinian people contain all the elements of total wars.

After the establishment of Israel in 1948, the Israeli strategy against the Arab states was one of pre-emptive attacks seeking territorial expansion. Thus, Israel colluded with Britain and France and attacked Egypt in 1956, partly to discredit Egyptian president Nasser, who had emerged as the voice of Arab nationalism. In 1967, with support from the Johnson administration, Israel attacked Egypt, Syria and Jordan, and occupied the Egyptian Sinai, the Syrian Golan Heights and the Palestinian West Bank and Gaza. In October 1973, Egyptian and Syrian forces attacked the Israeli forces of occupation and managed to shake the aura of invincibility of the Israeli army. Despite their growing degree of lethality, the 1956, 1967 and 1973 wars were largely conventional wars, not total wars.

But against the Palestinian people, the strategy has always been one of total war. In January, 1948, months before the Arab armies intervened to save what was left of Palestine, Ben-Gurion’s objective of destruction and expulsion followed a well-laid out total war strategy. As quoted above, Ben Gurion noted in his diary:

“The strategic objective [of the Jewish forces] was to destroy the urban communities, which were the most organized and politically conscious sections of the Palestinian people. This was not done by house-to-house fighting inside the cities and towns, but by the conquest and destruction of the rural areas surrounding most of the towns.”

In 1982, Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin sent his army into Lebanon as part of his total war against the Palestinians. Thousands of innocent civilians were killed. The Israeli army expelled the PLO from Lebanon, but did not defeat Palestinian nationalism.

The Oslo Agreement in 1993 presented Zionist leaders with a traditional dilemma: negotiate peace with the Palestinians now and

formally end the Zionist project of expulsion and territorial expansion; or continue the Zionist project and forcibly impose Israeli 'peace'.

With some exceptions, the Israeli leaders opted for the latter, as quickly became evident from the policies of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. When Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak half-heartedly embarked on negotiations with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat in 2000, the prospect of a negotiated settlement threatened the expansionist doctrine.

Sharon's provocative visit to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, in September of that year, triggered the second Palestinian Intifada, and gave Israeli leaders the excuse they needed to resume their strategy of total war against the Palestinians.

Sharon's total war strategy excluded any negotiated settlement. As Israeli writer Uzi Benziman pointed out: "Sharon's strategy was to violently provoke Palestinian retaliations and use them as an excuse to justify his rejection of a negotiated political settlement."⁴⁵

Amnesty International investigated the Israeli army's assaults against Palestinian refugee camps in Jenin in March and April 2002. Its report, published on November 4, 2002, concluded that "there is clear evidence that some of the acts committed by the IDF during Operation Defensive Shield were war crimes."

As part of his total war strategy, Sharon intensified attacks on the Palestinian people, destroying their properties, confiscating their land and building new settlements. The Israeli organization Peace Now reported that 12,000 new residents moved into Israeli settlements in the West Bank in 2005.⁴⁶

Following Hamas' victory in Palestinian legislative elections in January 2006, the Americans and Israelis secretly prepared plans to undermine the Hamas government and bring about its collapse.⁴⁷ The Hamas government seemed to be surviving the campaign of economic strangulation, and agreement with the PLO suggested Palestinian readiness to reach a negotiated settlement with Israeli leaders.

The Israelis responded, on June 9, 2006, with sustained strikes, killing seven Palestinian including three children on a Gaza beach, even though Hamas had been "observing a self-imposed cease-fire for more than a year".⁴⁸ On June 13, nine Palestinians, including two children, were killed.⁴⁹ On June 24, the Israeli army kidnapped two civilians, a doctor and his brother, from Gaza.⁵⁰

When Palestinian fighters responded by capturing an Israeli soldier, the Olmert government launched its total war plan: a war against land, properties and civilians as well as against economic and political infrastructures, including the kidnapping of elected officials and Palestinian cabinet members.

But Tel Aviv appears to have lost the strategic war. Prussian General Carl von Clausewitz's total war doctrine was not supposed to be an aim in itself. For Clausewitz, war was merely the continuation of policies by other means. The destruction of the enemy's forces, resources, infrastructures and properties and the killing of civilians were supposed to break the enemy's will to resist.

A total war that destroyed everything but left the enemy's will to resist unaffected or, worse still, strengthened, was clearly a failure. Regrettably, however, the debate in Israel about the failures of the attack on Gaza reflects short-sighted claims that withdrawal from Gaza in 2005 did not bring peace and that therefore there should be no withdrawal from the West Bank.

A more reasoned analysis should recommend itself to Israeli leaders and their American supporters. Total war against Palestine has failed to resolve the perennial contradiction of Israeli policy: proclaiming a desire for peace while pursuing a policy of dispossession, occupation, expansionism, regional hegemony and the illegal forcible imposition of its will. Israel must choose: either peace of equality or *Paxa Hebraica*.

NOTES

- 1 Yossi Beilin, *New York Times*, March 30, 2002.
- 2 Meron Rappaport, *Yedioth Ahronoth*, May 23, 2003.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Neve Gordon, 'Captives Behind Sharon's Wall', *Miflah*, November 7, 2003. See also *Counterpunch.org*, November 6, 2003.
- 7 B'Tselem, "Routing the Separation Barrier to Enable Israeli Settlement Expansion in the West Bank", December, 2005.
- 8 *Haaretz*, January 18, 2002.
- 9 Itamar Eichner, *Yedioth Ahronoth*, reported in *Israel Media Digest*, June 23, 2003 and quoted in "The Road Map to More Israeli Colonies: Israel's Colonization of

- The Occupied Palestinian Territories Since The Road Map's Issuance", October 2003.
- 10 Ofir Petersburg, *Yedioth Ahronoth*, quoted in Israel Media Digest, August 1, 2003.
- 11 *Jerusalem Post*, November 19, 2003.
- 12 Gush Shalom Press Release, Tel Aviv, December 18, 2003.
- 13 BBC, December 18, 2003, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3332361.stm.
- 14 *New York Times*, February 12, 2004.
- 15 Quoted in the *New York Times* by James Bennet, April 6, 2004.
- 16 *Haaretz*, October 8, 2004.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 "UNRWA Gaza Field Assessment of IDF Operation Days of Penitence", October 20, 2004.
- 20 Amira Hass "Don't Shoot Till You Can See They're Over the Age of 12", *Haaretz*, November 20, 2000.
- 21 Chris Hedges, "A Gaza Diary", *Harper's Magazine*, October 2001.
- 22 Chris McGreal, "A schoolgirl riddled with bullets. And no one is to blame", *Guardian*, October 21, 2004.
- 23 *Guardian*, Chris McGreal in Jerusalem, Wednesday, November 24, 2004.
- 24 *Haaretz*, editorial, 29 January, 2004.
- 25 Amnesty International, "Israel and the Occupied Territories Under the Rubble: House Demolition and Destruction of Land and Property", May 2004.
- 26 Human Rights Watch, October 18, 2004.
- 27 Baruch Kimmerling, "From Barak to the Road Map", *New Left Review* 23, September–October 2003, accessed on March 7, 2006.
- 28 *Le Monde*, November 11, 2004.
- 29 *New York Times*, November 10, 2004.
- 30 *New York Times*, November 12, 2004.
- 31 *New York Times Review of Books*, July 12, 2001.
- 32 Interview on US Public Radio Program, *Democracy Now*, February 19, 2006.
- 33 *Haaretz* interview with Arafat, July 7, 2004.
- 34 *Democracy Now*, op. cit., February 19, 2006.
- 35 *Haaretz*, June 14, 2004.
- 36 The *New York Times*, February 14, 2006.
- 37 The *Washington Post*, February 20, 2006.
- 38 *Haaretz*, March 10, 2006.
- 39 *The American Conservative*, March 24, 2003.
- 40 Emad Mekay, "Iraq War launched to Protect Israel", *Inter Press Service*, March 29, 2004.
- 41 *Charleston Post and Courier*, May 10, 2004.
- 42 John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, "The Israel Lobby", *London Review of Books*, vol. 28, no. 6, March 23, 2006.
- 43 "Blaming the Israel Lobby", *CounterPunch*, March 27, 2006.
- 44 "The Israel Lobby and Beyond", *CounterPunch*, April 4, 2006.
- 45 *Haaretz*, January 18, 2002.
- 46 See *Peacenow.org*, "No new West Bank outposts, but more settlers in 2005". See also *Democracynow.org*, February 8, 2006.

- 47 *New York Times*, February 14, 2006.
- 48 BBC, bbc.com, June 9, 2006.
- 49 *BBC.co.uk*, June 13, 2006.
- 50 Alexander Cockburn, 'Israel on the Slide', *The Nation*, August 24, 2006.

Epilogue

Educating Condoleezza Rice

In her visit to the Middle East in early 2007, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice used Kissingerian terms to claim that the Israeli war against Hizbollah in Lebanon and the US-led war in Iraq had created a unique geopolitical alignment that finally made peace in Palestine possible.

To the consternation of the Palestinians, however, she only brought the same biased and incomprehensively ill-informed approach embedded in the now discredited roadmap. The roadmap is the plan endorsed by the United States, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations. A fundamental obligation of the roadmap is that Israel stop all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Israeli leaders have done precisely the opposite: multiplying settlement activities by expanding existing settlements and confiscating ever more Palestinian land for the construction of the Separation Wall. Instead of dismantling the 20 so-called ‘illegal posts’ in the West Bank as they had promised in 2001, Israeli leaders allowed more posts to be established, now estimated at around 100 ‘illegal posts’, in addition to the already existing settlements

In July 2004, the International Court of Justice found that “the Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (including East Jerusalem) have been established in breach of international law”. It also found that the Separation Wall was in breach of international law.

A few days before Rice arrived in Israel, the Israeli government announced the establishment of a new settlement in the occupied West Bank. Washington responded with the usual slap on the wrist, albeit with unusually strong language for the Bush administration: “The establishment of a new settlement or the expansion of an existing settlement would violate Israel’s obligations under the roadmap”, a spokesman for the State Department said. “The US calls on Israel to meet its roadmap obligations and avoid taking steps that could be viewed as pre-determining the outcome of final-status negotiations.”¹

This was surely the time for the issue of Israel's continued violations of the roadmap ban on settlement to figure prominently in Rice's discussions with Israeli leaders. If Rice had wanted to bolster the embattled Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' standing, this would have been the time to press Israeli leaders to free the Palestinian government officials and legislators the Israeli forces had kidnapped and illegally imprisoned.

She might also have insisted that Israeli leaders hand over the US\$500 million in Palestinian tax revenues they had illegally withheld to punish the Palestinians for exercising their democratic right to elect a Hamas government.

Instead, Rice and Israeli Prime Minister Olmert repeated the usual condescending platitudes about the need for the occupied, not the occupier, to meet the conditions set by the occupier: recognition of Israel, relinquishing violence, and acceptance of previous agreements with Israel.

As for the roadmap, Rice and Olmert agreed: "a Palestinian government would have to abide by the road map". This view has to be considered alongside the fact that Israeli leaders never hid their intention to use the roadmap as an excuse to delay and abort the peace process.

Even the Israeli press recognized that the reference to the roadmap was "Olmert's way of foiling various recent attempts by Europeans and other elements to call for an international peace summit."²

Instead of being bolstered by Rice's visit, President Mahmoud Abbas felt weakened as Hamas's predictions were being verified by Rice's ill-informed approach.

To ask the Palestinians to implement the dead roadmap while the Israelis continue to take their land and build settlements, was, as one Abbas aid put it, "a joke".³

Perhaps Abbas should have invested some effort in educating Rice by giving her a copy of the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem's 2006 annual statistics report, which revealed the following hard facts about the actual situation.

During 2006, Israeli military actions killed 660 Palestinians including 141 children, while 17 Israelis, including one child, were killed by Palestinian actions. In addition, Israeli forces demolished, during the same year, 292 Palestinian houses in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, in addition to 42 houses in Occupied East Jerusalem.

The Israelis maintained some 52 permanent checkpoints in the West Bank, in addition to hundreds of physical obstacles such as concrete

blocs to restrict access to Palestinian communities. At the same time the Jewish settlers enjoyed access to some 41 special roadways, which the Palestinians were not allowed to use.

Israel was holding some 9,000 Palestnians, including 345 children, in prison, and of these some 738, including 22 children, were being held without trial and without knowing the charges against them.

President Jimmy Carter did not use the word ‘apartheid’ gratuitously in his book *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid* — for which he was criticized by the Washington establishment and the Israeli lobby.

B’Tselem reached the same conclusion in a December 2005 report: “Israel has established in the Occupied Territories a . . . discrimination regime, in which . . . a person’s rights are based on his or her national origin. This regime is the only one of its kind in the world, and brings to mind . . . the Apartheid regime in South Africa.”

Failure of the ‘Step-by-Step’ Approach

By her own admission, Secretary of State Rice’s shuttle diplomacy in the Middle East contained no grand ideas and was based on a step-by-step approach. The step-by-step strategy is the wrong approach to solving the Palestine conflict. It failed before and is bound to fail again.

Rice’s approach was based on the theory that if you achieve enough trust between the belligerent parties you will facilitate substantive negotiations for a final resolution of the conflict.

But the Palestine conflict is no ordinary conflict. From the beginning of the Zionist enterprise to take over Palestine from its inhabitants and turn it into a Jewish country, the Palestine conflict has been an existential one. There was no room in the Zionist project for a Palestinian people in the Jewish state. Throughout history, as has been shown, the Palestinians have suffered gross injustice, violence, dispersion and dispossession, and yet it is the Palestinians who have made, and are still being called on to make, concessions.

And it is this asymmetry of power that is being used by American mediators, including Rice, as the context for ‘solving’ the conflict. In effect, the victim is being asked to stop resisting the occupation, to protect the symbols of dispossession — the Jewish settlements — to accept punishment if they democratically elect the wrong government, and to be grateful when the daily restrictions on their lives are somewhat eased.

What is needed is a clear break with the past; a recognition that the Palestinians have suffered gross injustice and are entitled to reparations and a measure of justice, not as an act of charity and generosity from the occupier, but as of right.

And this is what is missing: a vision of peace based on law and justice, not force. Recent American attempts to resolve the conflict have focused on power politics and small steps, but why should the Israelis settle for anything less than what they have achieved by force when Washington allows them to flout ‘peace plans’ like the roadmap, build a Separation Wall and continue the dispossession of the Palestinians?

What Does Israel Want?

It is now more than 60 years since the launch of Jewish offensive operations designed to take over all of Palestine, and 40 years since the occupation of the rest of Palestine in 1967. In the face of continuing Israeli intransigence that is preventing peace, it is imperative to ask: what does Israel want?

Israeli writer Gideon Levi indirectly answered this question with an article in April 2007 in the Israeli paper *Haaretz* entitled: “Israel Does Not Want Peace”.⁴

Levy concluded that Israel did not want peace because Israeli leaders rejected the Arab League peace offer made in 2002 and again renewed by Arab leaders meeting in Saudi Arabia in 2007. The Arab peace offer was based on the international consensus for a solution to the conflict, embodied in the 1967 UN Security Council Resolution 242 formula of land for peace and on a just resolution of the Palestinian refugee problem. Israeli leaders showed no interest in the offer and Israeli Prime Minister Olmert categorically rejected the prospect of the return to Israel of even one Palestinian refugee.

Levy wrote that this was “the moment of truth”. He believed that the dismissal of the Arab League peace offer may have been the breakdown point, and left “no room for doubt that the tired refrain that ‘Israel supports peace’ has been left shattered”.

Levy was right in concluding that Israel did not want peace. But he was wrong in thinking that this was a recent phenomenon. This has now been extensively documented by the new Israeli historians. Israeli historian Avi Shlaim reported in his book *The Iron Wall: Israel and the*

Arab World that, according to Israeli archives, the claim that Israel had always wanted peace but there was nobody to talk to, was groundless. “The Arabs have repeatedly outstretched a hand to peace”, he told *Haaretz*, “and Israel has always rejected it. Each time with a different excuse.”⁵

Shlaim found that Syrian leader Husni al-Zaim had wanted a peace agreement with Israel. King Farouk of Egypt had been ready to make peace with Israel. King Abdullah of Jordan had also wanted an agreement. Israel turned them all down. Even Nasser, portrayed by Israel and the West as war-bent, wrote a personal letter to then-Prime Minister Moshe Sharett, and sent emissaries. These included Abdel Rahman Sadek, the Egyptian press officer in Paris, who, in 1955, conveyed to the Israelis Nasser’s interest in reducing tension and lifting trade restrictions. Israeli leaders showed no interest.

This made sense from the point of view of Zionist leaders. As long as the Zionist project of conquest and colonization of Palestine was incomplete, and as long as Zionist ideology could be imposed by force, there was no reason to abandon the Zionist project for the sake of making peace with the Arabs.

Besides, Zionist leaders rationalized their rejection of peace offers by arguing that their forcible conquest and colonization of Palestine had alienated the Arabs so much that no Arab leader would really want to make peace with them.

In 1956, Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion told Nahum Goldman, President of the World Zionist Organization, who was urging him to negotiate a peaceful settlement with the Arabs:

I don’t understand your optimism. Why should the Arabs make peace? If I were an Arab leader I would never make terms with Israel. That is natural. We have taken their country. Sure, God promised it to me, but what does it matter to them? Our God is not theirs. We come from Israel, it is true, but two thousand years ago, and what is it to them? There has been anti-Semitism, the Nazis, Hitler, and Auschwitz but was that their fault? They only see one thing: we have come here and stolen their country.⁶

Conflict has therefore always been necessary, firstly to carry out by force the project of conquest and transformation of Palestine into a Jewish state and secondly, to justify Israeli rejections of peace offers that threatened to bring the Zionists’ project to a premature end.

But conflict has not eliminated the legitimacy of the rights of the Palestinians, and oppression has not diminished their resistance. Courageous Israelis understand that, and only they can bring about peace.

Hope for the Future

In Israel, a few courageous voices continue to oppose and condemn Israeli actions. Thus, Uri Avnery, a columnist for the Israeli newspaper *Ma'ariv*, wrote: "When dozens of wounded people lie in the streets and slowly bleed to death because the army shoots at every moving ambulance, it creates terrible hatred. When the army secretly buries hundreds of bodies of men, women and children, it creates terrible hatred. When tanks destroy houses, topple electricity poles, open water pipes, leave behind thousands of homeless people and cause children to drink from puddles, it causes terrible hatred. A Palestinian child, who sees all this with his eyes, becomes the suicide bomber of tomorrow . . . In the end, only one thing will be remembered: our giant military machine assaulted the small Palestinian people, and the small Palestinian people and its leader held on. In the eyes of the Palestinians, and not only theirs, it will look like a tremendous victory, the victory of a modern David against Goliath."⁷

On the occasion of the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, Israeli journalist Amira Hass regrettably noted the complacency of the Israeli public that allowed the dispossession and discrimination to go unchallenged. "For the sake of about half a percent of the population of the Gaza Strip, a Jewish half-percent", she wrote in *Haaretz*, "the lives of the remaining 99.5 percent were totally disrupted and destroyed – worthy of wonderment indeed. And also amazing is how most of the other Israelis, who did not go themselves to settle the homeland, suffered this reality and did not demand that their government put an end to it."⁸

Mohammad Barakeh, a communist member of the Israeli parliament, in a letter to the International Court of Justice, wrote: "The Israeli army has indiscriminately shelled refugee camps, using helicopters, warplanes, tanks and heavy artillery, killing hundreds of people. Medical assistance has been denied; hospitals have been shelled . . . The population is starving because of the curfew, while water pipes and electricity networks have been destroyed."⁹

Former head of the Israeli Security Services Amy Ayalon has openly called for immediate Israeli withdrawal from all the Occupied Arab

Territories and, in February 2002, the Israeli Council for Peace and Security, with about 1,000 establishment members, joined the growing movement calling for immediate withdrawal.

Then there is the personal courage and moral strength of the Israeli soldiers and officers who are refusing to serve in the Occupied Arab Territories. On January 25, 2002, *Haaretz* published a letter signed by 52 Israeli soldiers and reserve officers. The letter, entitled the “Courage to Refuse” petition, outlined the reasons these soldiers and officers gave for refusing to serve for the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) in Occupied Palestinian Territories. “We, reserve combat officers and soldiers of the Israel Defence Forces, We, whose eyes have seen the bloody toll this Occupation exacts from both sides . . . We shall not continue to fight beyond the 1967 borders in order to dominate, expel, starve and humiliate an entire people.”

Major Rami Kaplan, another ‘refuser’, told the BBC programme *Hard Talk* on November 6, 2002, that the number of soldiers refusing to serve had swollen to over 500, and that he would rather go to prison than serve in the Occupied Palestinian Territories because the occupation had created a totally corrupt culture in Israel.

By December 2004, the number of soldiers refusing to serve the occupation had grown to 1,387. The ranks of conscientious objectors had also grown. In addition to the ‘Courage to Refuse’ group, they now include the *Shministim* (high school seniors), some of whom were sent to jail, the ‘Pilots Group’, established in 2003, which also refuses to serve the occupation, and, significantly, the *Sayeret Matka* elite commando unit whose leaders wrote to Sharon informing him that they would not serve the occupation.

In rejecting the original Zionist principle of “might takes precedence over right” and the culture of hatred and oppression which it produced and which continues to be cultivated by the current political and military leadership in Israel, these Israeli officers and high school conscientious objectors provide a source of hope for tomorrow and the future generation of Israelis and Palestinians. As Elad Lahav, another Israeli army officer who refused to serve in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and who was sentenced to 28 days imprisonment for refusing to serve in Hebron, declared at his trial: “I refuse to serve in the occupied territories, because when my children grow up, I want to be able to look them in the eyes.”¹⁰

The culture of hatred and violence in Israel, which breeds the hatred and insanity of the suicide bombers, and the consequent suffering and victimization of innocent people in both Israel and Palestine, is not fertile ground for moral leadership. As long as moral values continue to be subjugated to the original Zionist doctrine of “might takes precedence over right”, the vicious cycle of hatred and violence will continue to perpetuate itself.

Moral leadership requires the political and military leadership in Israel and their supporters in the West to recognize not just that the occupation is unjust, and creating a culture of hatred and violence, but also that the Palestinians have suffered a gross injustice and are entitled by right, and not as an act of charity, to freedom, justice and reparations.

Pessimism and despair engulf the region and depress the Palestinians, for despite the emergence and admission by Israeli scholars of the truth about how the Jewish state was established, there is no indication that current Israeli leaders are ready to even admit that Israel has inflicted a gross injustice on the Palestinian people, let alone make amends and offer reparations.

In the end, only the struggle of the Palestinian people and the support of intellectually honest and morally courageous people in Israel and among its Western supporters will save what is left of Palestine and Palestinian society. And sooner or later this is bound to happen, if for no other reason than the fact that despite the destruction, the expulsion, the dispossession, the displacement and dispersion, the Palestinian people are still there, as a people. Might may have taken precedence over right when Israel was established at the expense of the Palestinians, and the awesome military machine of Israel may have shattered their society, but it has not broken their national resistance.

At a time of general failure of moral leadership in international relations and of despair and growing frustrations in the Middle East, there is urgent need, more than ever, of intellectual honesty and moral courage. In refusing to “to dominate, expel, starve and humiliate an entire people”, the Israeli officers of the ‘Courage to Refuse’ movement have rejected the old Zionist policy of “might over right”. This may very well be a crucial turning point in the conflict over Palestine. The other crucial turning point will come when more people in Israel and among Israel’s supporters in the West come around to understanding that we all have a stake in solving both this conflict and other conflicts around the

world. And this is because, as the Turkish Peace Initiative for Palestine that was launched during the April 2002 Israeli assault against the Palestinian population, proclaimed:¹¹ *Now we are all Palestinians, so that light may prevail against darkness, freedom against despotism, and life against violence and death.*

NOTES

- 1 *New York Times*, December 28, 2007.
- 2 *Haaretz*, January 16, 2007.
- 3 *Time* magazine, January 14, 2007.
- 4 *Haaretz*, April 10, 2007.
- 5 *Haaretz*, August 13, 2005. The book referred to is Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (New York: Norton, 2000).
- 6 Nahum Goldman, *The Jewish Paradox: A Personal Memoir* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1978), pp. 99–100.
- 7 First published in *Ma'ariv*. Reprinted in the *Guardian*, April 16, 2002.
- 8 *Haaretz*. August 25, 2005.
- 9 *Washington Times*, April 12, 2002.
- 10 *The Paper*, issue 32, <http://www.thepaper.org>.
- 11 Personal communication.

Index

A

Abbas, Mahmoud, 286
Abd al-Rahman Azzam Pasha, 200, 202
Absentee Property Law, 229
Absentee Property Regulations, 228
Abdullah, Emir, 55, 64, 75, 120
Ad Hoc Committee, 164, 165
Adams, Michael, 232
Advisory Committee on Palestine, 31
Ahad Ha-am, 5, 23
Allon Plan, 240
Allon, Yigal, xvii, 186, 193, 194
American Commission, 43
American Congress, 25, 29, 141, 154
American Congressmen, 217
American Consul, 167
American Council for Judaism, 231
American foreign policy, 238
American Israeli Political Action Committee, 277, 278
American Jewish community, 242
American Jewish Conference, 140
American Jews, 141, 190, 206, 232, 242
American Palestine Committee, 136, 140
American-Arab relations, 166
American-British relations, 145
American-British rivalry, 152
American-Israeli collusion, 273
American-Palestine relations, 169
American-Russian competition, 152
Amnesty International, 281
Anglo-American Commission, 157
Anglo-American Committee, 139, 151, 158
Anglo-American concern, 168
Anglo-American war, 261
Anglo-Arab agreement, 8, 26, 27
Anglo-Arab Committee, 128
Anglo-French Declaration, 30, 43, 57
Anglo-French oil deal, 67
Anglo-Iraqi treaty, 111
Anglo-Jewish Association, 18
Anglo-Zionist, 11
Annan, Kofi, 254, 258
anti-British, 114, 139

anti-Hussein, 277
anti-imperialist, 171, 241
anti-Jewish, 89
anti-Semitism, xii, 2, 3, 6, 11, 16, 132, 141, 278, 279, 289
anti-Soviet Western plans, 152
anti-Zionism, 6, 33, 36, 43, 73, 114, 132
Antonius, George, 10, 28
Arab armies, 237, 238
Arab Higher Committee, 114, 117, 125, 225
Arab leaders, 126
Arab League, 200, 272, 288
Arab nationalism, 75, 136, 234, 238, 239, 244, 280
Arab nationalist movement, 56, 101
Arab Palestinian majority, 203
Arab refugees, 232
Arab Revolt 8, 27, 28, 115, 117, 125, 126, 129
Arabian American Oil Company, 147
Arab-Israeli conflict, xi, 237-241, 279
Arab-Israeli front, 233
Arab-Jewish relations, 209
Arlsoroff, Chaim, 107
Austin, Warren, 171
Avnery, Uri, 290

B

Balfour Declaration, vi, ix, 15, 17, 21-26, 28, 32, 34, 57, 58, 60, 61, 63, 64, 67, 71, 72, 75, 81, 83, 95, 96, 118, 135, 150, 159, 163, 165, 175
Balfour, Arthur, v, 6, 14, 16, 17, 21, 34, 38, 39, 42, 45, 71, 84
Barak, Ehud, 281
Barakeh, Mohammed, 290
barbarism, v, 4
Basle, 4, 6
Begin, Menachem, vii, xiv, xviii, 139, 182, 189, 190, 192, 193, 200, 209, 245, 280
Begin-Sharon strategy, 246
Beilin, Yossi, 257
Ben-Ami, Shlomo, 193, 227, 242, 244, 271, 272, 278

Ben-Gurion, David, vi, vii, xv, xvi, xvii, 92,
107, 115, 119, 121, 132, 133, 134, 135, 158,
175–177, 179, 180, 181, 186, 191, 204, 206,
209–216, 221, 224, 225, 227, 230, 234, 243,
249, 258, 262, 280, 289
Bentwich, Norman, 77
Benvenisti, Meron, 242
Benziman, Uzi, 262, 281
Berger, Elmer, 231
Berlin Wall, 258
Bernadotte, Count Folk, 207, 209
Bernadotte plan, 211
Bevin, Ernest, 203
Biltmore Program, 134–136, 141, 150, 157–159
bin Laden, Osama, 2
Blair, Tony, 261
Bloom, Sol, 167
Bols, Louis, 73
Bolshevik Revolution, 27, 38
British High Commissioner, 194
British Royal Commission Report, 179
British trusteeship, 161
Buchanan, Patrick, 275
Bush, George W., 261, 264, 279, 285

C

Cairo Agreement, 251
Cairo Conference, 76
Californian Congressman, 217
Camp David Agreements, 245
Camp David framework, 248
Carter, Jimmy, 273, 287
Cecil, Lord Robert, 14
Central Syrian Committee, 40
Chamberlain, Joseph, 6
Chamberlain, Neville, 15
Childers, Erskine, 243
Chomsky, Noam, 279
Churchill Memorandum, 104
Churchill, Winston, 15, 59, 64, 74–76, 81,
84, 85, 95, 96, 128, 131, 136, 137, 234
Clark, Clifford, 161
Clayton, Gilbert, 71, 72
Clemenceau, Georges, 30, 42
Clifford, Clark, 171
Cold-Warrior analysis, 245
Congress of Zionism, 234
Courage to Refuse, 291, 292
Cross, Richard, 140
Crossman, Richard, 101
Curzon, Lord, vi, 41, 42, 45, 56, 61, 62, 64,
65, 74

D

Damascus, 10, 51, 54, 55, 59, 199
Damascus Programme, 51

Dasgupta, Punyapriya, 206
Dayan, Moshe, 131, 214, 244
de-Arabize, 186
Declaration to the seven, 28
Deedes, Wyndham, 71
Deir Yassin, 188, 189, 201, 202, 222, 226
Dreyfus affair (1894), 2

E

Egyptian–Israeli Peace Treaty, 245
European imperialism, xi
European Jews, 1, 25, 141, 142, 148, 149,
151, 159
Export–Import Bank, 217
Extremist Policy, 71

F

Feisal, Emir, 30, 38, 40, 50
Feisal–Weizmann agreement, 37
Findley, Paul, 279
Finklestein, Norman, 279
Flapan, Simha, 225, 230, 242
Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, 275
Fourth Geneva Convention, 259
Frankfurter and Gans, 61
Freedom Report, 190

G

General Assembly Resolution 194, 211, 230
General Syrian Congress, 49, 54
Geneva Agreement, 262, 265
George, Lloyd, vi, 7, 13–15, 18, 29, 42, 45,
55, 65, 73, 74, 84, 135
Georges-Picot, François, 8
Gery, Lord, 67
Gibbons, Herbert Adams, 42
Glubb, Sir John Bagot, 181, 202
Goldman, Nahum, 289
Grady, Henry F., 158
Greek–Catholic archbishop, 222
Grey, Sir Edward, 10, 11
Gulf War, 248, 277
Gvat, Kibbutz, 244

H

Hadrhamaut, 75
Hajj Amin al-Husseini, 99–100, 106, 111,
114, 125
Hammond, Sir Laurie, 121
Hansen, Suzy, 244
Hass, Amira, 267, 290
Haycraft Commission, 102
Haycraft, Thomas, 82, 89
Hedges, Chris, 267
Herbert Plumer, Lord, 98
Herzl, Theodor, 2–6

Hess, Moses, 1
 Hirst, David, 139
 Hitler, xiv, 89, 91, 93, 127, 289
 Hogarth, D.G., 26
 Hollings, Ernest, 275
 Hoover, Herbert, 30, 179
 Hope Simpson Report, 105
 Hourani, Albert, 81
 Hugh, Thomas, 139
 Human Rights Watch organization, 247, 268
 Hussein–McMachon agreement, 67, 128
 Hussein, Sharif, 8, 26, 27, 36, 54, 55
 Hussein, Jamal, 125
 al-Hussein, Musa Kazim Pasha, 76, 79, 96, 99
 Hyamson, Albert, 142, 162, 223

I

idealism, 2, 3
 Illinois State Legislature, 164
 International Court of Justice, 164, 168, 238, 258, 260, 261, 264, 275, 285, 290
 international law, xiv, 23, 60, 163, 258, 259, 261, 264, 268, 285
 International Red Cross, 246
 Iraq Petroleum Company, 147
 Iraqi Jews, 231
 Islamic Congress, 106
 Islamic revolution, 277
 Islington, Lord, 66
 Israeli Arabs, 268
 Israeli Army Engineering Corps, 210
 Israeli Council for Peace and Security, 291
 Israeli Defence Forces, 225, 238, 254, 266, 291
 Israeli democracy, 277
 Israeli Foreign Ministry, 228
 Israeli High Court, 260
 Israeli Security Services, 290
 Israeli–Palestinian conflict, xi, 255, 262

J

Jabotinsky, Vladimir, xiv, xv, 82, 106, 107, 117, 125, 130, 133, 134, 139, 209, 243, 257
 Jacobson, Eddie, 161, 211
 Jeffries, Joseph, 15, 24, 25, 58, 62, 63
 Jewish American organizations, 190
 Jewish colonization, 2, 13, 179
 Jewish Defence organization, 130
 Jewish General Labour Organization, 80, 112
 Jewish history, 4, 57
 Jewish Labour Committee, 91
 Jewish leaders, 1, 5, 15, 25, 128, 149, 170
 Jewish leadership, xv, 148, 180
 Jewish National Fund, 80, 103, 184, 185, 229

Jewish National Home, 13, 14, 16, 17, 32, 35, 41, 42, 64, 65, 72, 77, 80, 84, 86, 98, 118, 119, 135, 142, 147
 Jewish national movement, 2
 Jewish national reconstruction, 1
 Jewish nationality, xii, 2, 90
 Jewish state, vii, ix, x, xii, xv, xvii, 3, 4, 10, 11, 15, 18, 22, 25, 26, 38, 42, 52, 65, 73, 74, 86, 89, 92, 98, 107, 116, 118, 119, 121, 126–128, 134, 135, 138, 148, 151, 152, 157, 158, 162, 165, 169–172, 175, 176, 182–188, 190, 194, 195, 200, 203–206, 208, 212, 213, 215, 217, 221, 224, 225, 226–228, 231–234, 243, 244, 257, 277, 287, 289, 292
 Jewish-Ottoman Land Company, 5
 Johnson, Herschel, 164, 238, 280
 Johnson-Hicks, William, 79
 Joint Chiefs of Staff, 170

K

Kamel, Mohammad Ibrahim, 245
 Kapeliouk, Amnon, 210, 224, 242
 Kaplan, Rami, 291
 Kennan, George, 169
 Khalidi, Walid, 126, 159, 163, 181, 223, 224, 243
 Khan, Sir Muhammed Zafrulla, 167
 Kidston, George, 46
 Kimche, David, 142
 Kimche, Jon, 35, 37, 142, 238
 Kimmerling, Baruch, 184, 185, 269, 279
 King–Crane Commission, 49, 51, 52–54, 58, 68, 72, 146
 King David Hotel, 151, 189
 Kissinger, Henry, 239, 241, 245
 Knabenshue, Paul, 100
 Korean war, 234

L

Lahav, Elad, 291
 Land Acquisition Law of 1953, 229
 Lansing, Robert, 41
 Lausanne Conferences, 233
 Lausanne Protocol, 230
 League of Nations, 39, 50, 56, 58, 60, 66, 67, 96, 99, 146
 Lenczowski, George, 165
 Levi, Gideon, 288
 Levy, David, 258
 Liberation Army, 183
 Lilienthal, Alfred, 279
 London Conference, 158, 159, 161, 162
 Lorch, Netanel, 202
 Lord Chancellor, 128
 Lovett, Robert, 169
 Lucerne Congress, 112

M

Macmillan, Harold, 145
Magnes, Judah, 175
Mallison, W.T., 23
Marlow, John, 26, 130
Marshall, George, 170
Massad, Joseph, 278
Mayhew, Christopher, 140, 232
McClellan, Scott, 263
McGhee, George, 216
McMahon, Sir Henry, 8, 9, 55
Meinertzhagen, Richard, 72
Mesopotamia, 29, 44, 51, 53, 56, 58, 62, 63, 65, 67, 84
Miller, Judith, 270
Milner, Lord, 16
Mitchell Report, 272
Monroe Doctrine of 1823, 145
Morris, Benny, 184, 191, 194, 205, 210, 224, 242, 243, 270, 279
Morrison–Grady Plan, 158
Moyné, Lord, 136

N

National Military Organization, 89, 90
Nazism, 89
Netanyahu, Benyamin, 250
Neuman, Michael, 278
New York Democratic Party, 161
New Zionist Organization, 117, 127
nihilism, 1
Niles, David, 166
non-Continental communities, 24
non-Zionist American Jews, 141
North American political culture, 241

O

Occupied Palestinian Territories, 260, 261, 268, 273, 278, 285, 286, 287, 291
Olmert, Ehud, 274, 286, 288
Olmert government, 282
Olmert plan, 274
Operation Ben-Ami, 193
Operation Brichah, 207
Operation Days of Penitence, 266
Operation Defensive Shield, 254, 281
Operation Fait Accompli, 215
Operation Nachshon, 183, 188
Operation Yiftah, 193, 194
Ormsby-Gore, Henry, 33, 51, 96, 120
Ormsby-Gore, William, 96, 120
Oslo Agreement, xviii, 248, 252, 271, 275, 280
Ottoman Empire, 6–9, 28, 51

P

Palestine Arab Congress, 120
Palestine Arab National Party, 98
Palestine Arab Party, 125
Palestine Arab, 93–96, 100, 101
Palestine Conciliation Commission, 215, 230
Palestine Liberation Organization, 246–249, 252, 271, 278, 280, 281
Palestine National Council, 248
Palestinian Arab leaders, 33, 93, 114, 136
Palestinian Arabs, xi, xiii, xvi, 5, 11, 14, 31, 35, 43, 63–65, 82–85, 93–95, 97, 101, 107, 112, 113, 117, 119, 125, 134, 138, 143, 158, 160, 162, 168, 170, 172, 178, 179, 181, 183, 184–188, 193, 194, 209, 210, 225, 229
Palestinian fundamental rights, 274
Palestinian National Authority, 252
Palestinian nationalism, 245–247
Palestinian refugee problem, 228
Palestinian refugees, 233, 238, 240
Palestinian rockets, 266
Palestinian–Zionist truce negotiations, 192
pan-Arab Congress, 120
Pan-Arabists, 105
Pappe, Ilan, 180, 279
Paris Peace Conference, 21, 38, 41
Partition Resolution, 161, 165–168, 171, 175, 176, 179–183, 185–188, 194, 203, 204, 206, 208, 215, 221, 224, 271
Pasha, Glubb, 194
Pasha, Noukrashi, 200, 201
Passfield, Lord, 104
Peace Conference in Lausanne, 230
Peace Conference in Paris, x, 36
Peace Now Organization, 273, 281
Peel Commission, 111, 118, 119, 120, 121, 125, 135, 225
Peel Partition Plan, 179
Peres, Shimon, 270, 273
Peretz, Don, 229
Pinsker, Leon, 2
Plan Aleph (Plan A), 180
Plan Bet (Plan B), 180
Plan Dalet (Plan D), 182–186, 180, 188, 202, 226
Plan Gimmel (Plan C), 180, 182, 186, 202
political zionism, ix, 1, 2, 149, 235
Polkes, Feivel, 91
post-Darwinian, 3
Powell, Colin, 262
Prinz, Joachim, 90
pro-Arab, 129, 141, 146, 242
pro-German position, 152
pro-Israel, 278

pro-Jewish American policy, 170
 protection of Arab rights, 22
 pro-Western Arab governments, 152, 239
 pro-Western feudal Arab regimes, 171
 pro-Zionist, xv, 7, 13, 18, 79, 83, 95–97, 120,
 129, 139–141, 157, 158, 160–163, 165, 167,
 169, 172, 209, 217

Q

Qassam, Sheikh, 113
 Qibya massacre, xiv, 241

R

Rabin, Itzhak, 271
 Raghib al-Nashashibi, 100
 Rice, Condoleezza, 285–287
 Rogan, Eugene, 242
 Rogers, William, 239
 Roosevelt, Eleanor, 161
 Roosevelt, Franklin, 148
 Rosen, Penhas, 212
 Rothschild, Lord, 6, 18, 21
 Royal Air Force, 212
 Rubenberg, Cheryl, 279
 Rutenberg, Pinhas, 79

S

Sabra and Shatilla massacre, xiv, 247
 Samuel, Herbert, 7, 10–14, 31, 44, 45, 55, 56,
 62, 71, 74, 77–80, 83–85, 95, 96, 98
 Samuel, Sir Herbert, 62, 71
 Samuel–Deedes administration, 78, 79
 San Remo Conference, 55, 57, 58, 66, 147
 Sarid, Kibbutz, 244
 Sasson, Eliyahu, 214
 Scott, C.P., 7, 13
 Second World War, 206, 207
 Segev, Tom, 242–244
 Sereni, Enzo, 92
 Shalim, Avi, 289
 Shalom, Gush, 263, 270
 Shamir, Yitzhak, 89
 Sharett, Moshe, 115, 208, 216
 Sharon, Ariel, xiv, 245, 252, 254,
 262, 273
 Sharon Plan, 263–265, 269, 281
 Shaw Commission, 102, 106
 Shaw, Walter, 101
 Shlaim, Avi, 242, 288
 Shuckburgh, Sir John, 95
 Simpson, Sir John Hope, 103
 Sinai Agreements, 276
 Sivan, Emmanuel, 272
 Spirituality, 2
 Standard Oil Company of California, 147

Stern Gang, vii, 89, 138, 139, 178, 181, 188,
 189, 209, 223, 225
 Stettinius, Edward R., 151
 Strachey, John, 139
 Suez Canal, x, 1, 7, 15, 150, 237
 Supreme Allied Council, 57, 63, 66
 Sykes, Christopher, vii, 93, 103, 129, 132
 Sydenham, Lord, 80
 Sykes, Sir Mark, 8, 13, 14, 16, 17, 37
 Sykes–Picot Agreement, 8, 9, 27, 30, 43, 49,
 56, 57
 Syrian Declaration, 51, 58

T

Tenet Report, 272
 Thornton, A.P., 129
 Toynbee, Arnold, 9, 16
 Tripartite Declaration, 233, 234
 Truman Doctrine, 153, 154, 234
 Truman, Harry, 154, 165, 172
 Truman, Margaret, 161
 Turkish rulers, 4, 27

U

Uganda, xii, 6
 UN Commission for Human Rights, 253, 259
 UN Conciliation Commission, 228
 UN General Assembly, 180, 233, 258, 259
 UN Palestine Partition Resolution of 1947, 271
 UN Resolution 181, 248
 UN Resolution 194, 264
 UN Security Council Draft Resolution 980, 259
 UN Security Council Resolution 242, 239,
 264, 288
 UN Security Council, 242
 UN trusteeship, xi, 158, 169, 171, 183
 Unilateral Declaration of Independence, 180
 United Nations General Assembly, 261
 United Nations Palestine Commission, 171
 United Nations Relief and Works Agency, 216
 United Nations resolutions, 232
 United Nations Security Council, 153, 208
 United Nations Special Committee on Palestine
 (UNSCOP), 162–164
 United States Zionists, 161

V

Versailles Peace Conference, vi
 von Clausewitz, Carl, 280, 282

W

Wailing Wall, 100, 101
 Walt, Stephen, 275
 Washington Declaration, 250
 Wauchope, Sir Arthur, 106

Weisglass, Dov, 265
 Weitz, Joseph, 179
 Weizmann, Chaim, vi, xi, 6, 7, 11, 13, 18, 22,
 32–35, 37, 41, 42, 55, 57, 62, 66, 71, 73,
 76, 84, 95, 98, 104, 106, 107, 120, 130, 131,
 134, 137, 159, 165
 Welles, Summer, 165
 Westermann, W.L., 43
 Western imperialism, 18, 237
 Wilson, R.D., 177, 178
 Wilson, Woodrow, 166, 187, 192
 Woodhead Report, 127
 World War I, x, 6, 36, 145, 146
 World War II, 93, 131, 138, 145, 147, 148,
 205, 207, 280
 World Zionist Organization, 90, 91, 185, 289
 Wye Agreement, 251, 252

Y

Yalta Conference, 150
 Yasser Arafat, xix, 246, 252, 253, 262, 270,
 271, 272, 281
 Yehushua, Kefar, 244
 Yishuv–Abdullah agreement, 201

Z

al-Zaim, Husni, 214, 289
 Zelikow, Philip, 275
 Zinni mission, 272
 Zionist Commission, 32, 33, 35, 71–73, 77,
 82, 84, 175
 Zionist Conference, 134

Zionist Congress, 4, 6, 72, 112, 121, 158
 Zionist doctrine, 292
 Zionist High Command, 186
 Zionist idea, 2, 16, 74
 Zionist leaders, vi, ix, xi, xii, xv, xvii, 17, 31,
 36, 43, 45, 55, 62, 65, 67, 84, 91, 92, 104,
 107, 115, 120, 121, 126, 128, 130, 131,
 133, 139, 158, 160, 166, 176, 177–179,
 181, 208, 211, 212–214, 216, 217, 224,
 226, 227, 231, 234, 243, 247, 257, 262,
 280, 289
 Zionist map, 159
 Zionist movement, 133
 Zionist Organization, xi, 4, 5, 17, 22, 26, 32,
 61, 62, 65, 71, 72, 80, 81, 83, 90, 91, 102,
 103, 134, 136, 148, 225
 Zionist Organization Congress, 80
 Zionist plan, 1, 10, 11, 18, 36, 45, 57, 74, 78,
 95, 129, 131, 176, 209, 231
 Zionist policy, 85, 107
 Zionist program, 17, 26, 38, 49, 52–54, 72,
 74, 76, 81, 97, 99, 159, 166
 Zionist project, x, xi, xii, xiii, xvii, 4, 14, 15,
 21–23, 25, 32, 35, 37, 42, 71, 76, 85, 95,
 116, 128, 129, 181, 234, 240, 243, 257, 262,
 281, 287, 289
 Zionist revolution, 1
 Zionist strategy, xii, xv, xvi, xviii, 107, 121,
 133, 135, 170, 257
 Zionist terrorism, 157, 160
 Zionist–Nazi accord, 90, 91
 Zionist–Palestinian confrontation, 175