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Conflict Over Palestine

Since the British Government issued its "White Paper" in May, 1939, controversy has sharpened over the Zionist-Arab conflict in Palestine. Because its settlement will doubtless rank high among postwar problems, we attempt this week to analyze that conflict without rendering any verdict on the issue.

During the first World War the British Government, finding Turkish aid to Germany imminent and American aid to the Allies still doubtful, made certain promises to Arab Nationalists and to Jewish leaders of the Zionist movement. Out of the diametrically opposed aims of the recipients of those pledges the conflict in Palestine arises. The Zionist aim is the conversion of the land of Judaism's origin into a national home for the Jewish people. The Palestinian Arabs' objective is independent sovereignty in their ancestral home, preferably as part of a reunited Syria.

Today in Palestine 1,200,000 Arabs and 560,000 Jews face each other, practically *en bloc*, in bitter enmity. The Palestine Royal Commission, sent from London in 1936 to "ascertain the underlying causes" of Arab-Jewish disturbances, reported:

"There is no common ground between them. The Arab community is predominantly Asiatic in character, the Jewish community is predominantly European. They differ in religion and in language. Their cultural and social life, their ways of thought and conduct, are as incompatible as their national aspirations. These last are the greatest bar to peace. . . . Neither Arab nor Jew has any sense of service to a single State."¹

The application of the Mandate System to Palestine and the stated objectives of the Palestine Mandate indicate a belief on the part of the British Government, and presumably of the League of Nations Council which approved the Mandate, that the building of a Jewish homeland and the fostering of Arab national independence were objectives not mutually incompatible in Palestine. They seem to have expected much from the conciliatory effect of the material prosperity which Jewish immigration would bring to the country, and from the impetus offered to general Arab development by Jewish enterprise, technology and intellectual achievement. In consequence of the inclusion of the Balfour Declaration, the text of which will be quoted later, in its preamble the Palestine Mandate differed from the other Class A Mandates for ex-Turkish territories in the omission of that "provisional independence" which was specified by the League of Nations Covenant. The British construe the Covenant in this respect to be permissive rather than obligatory.

With Arab realization of ultimate Zionist aims conflict

has grown steadily more bitter and seems likely to intensify. As the Arab community grows in number and improves in economic status and education its demand for independence is likely to grow, together with its resentment toward the obstacle—evidently and admittedly the only obstacle—to that independence, the Jewish National Home. The rise to independence of Saudi Arabia, the Yemen, Iraq, Egypt, and Trans-Jordan and the progress of Syria and Lebanon spur the ambition and intensify the sense of injustice of the Palestinian Arabs. The Arabs throughout the Middle East are consolidating, as is evident in current discussions of a possible federation or league of Arab States. "At the same time, the cruelties of the Nazi regime put an unbearable pressure upon the Jews in Palestine and abroad to assure a haven for those who can escape and to preserve a core of Jewish culture which may flourish in independent security.

The Crown Colony type of government under the Mandate is admittedly unsuitable for governing either educated Arabs or democratic Jews, each separately capable of full self-government. It cannot evolve into self-government without cooperation between the two elements of the population. With the close of world hostilities only force is likely to keep the uneasy balance between these two communities. The dilemma of the British Government is a very real one. The British people are strongly sympathetic toward ideals of independence; they have old and strong ties with the Arab people as well as deep commitments in the Moslem world; British friendship for the Jewish people is of long standing and is at present intensified by sympathy in their great agony.

The Anglo-Arab Pledge

The first of the British promises already referred to was made early in 1916 to leaders of the Arab Nationalist Movement, which was seeking possible assistance in turning to account the opportunity for successful revolt offered by Turkey's imminent involvement in the war as an ally of Germany. The Arabs were to strike at Turkish power in conjunction with the Allied attack. In return Britain agreed to support the claim to national independence of the Arab peoples within a specified area. The pledge consisted mainly of correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon, High Commissioner of Egypt, acting for the British Government, and the Grand Sherif of

¹ Palestine Royal Commission Report. 1937. Cmd. 5479. Pp. 370-1.

Mecca, later King Hussein of the Hejaz, acting for the Arab Nationalists.

A point which has been ever since in dispute is whether or not Palestine was included in the sections of territory excepted by Great Britain from the area of Arab independence. The British Government has maintained that it was certainly intended to be and definitely was excluded. The Arabs contest this interpretation. In 1939 a Committee appointed by the United Kingdom and Arab Delegates in London to consider the documents reported that they had been "unable to reach agreement upon an interpretation." Still maintaining that "on a proper construction of the Correspondence Palestine was in fact excluded" the United Kingdom Delegates had nevertheless informed the Arab Delegates that certain of the latter's contentions had "greater force than has appeared hitherto" and that the language "was not so specific and unmistakable as it was thought to be at the time."²

The British promise in the McMahon-Hussein correspondence referred to "those regions lying within those [proposed] frontiers wherein Great Britain is free to act without detriment to the interests of her ally, France," and ended with the warning that maintenance of French goodwill would be paramount.³ The absence of definite delimitation of excepted areas apparently arose from a disinclination to supply the French with a basis for claims greater than fortune might otherwise produce. The Sherif's reply postponed the point for postwar decision and warned that there would be no concession whatever of Arab land to France. Careful reading suggests less a misunderstanding than strategic preparation for later moves, with fair warning given by either side.

In view of international interests in the area at the time and the existence there of Russian, Italian, French and American missions of the Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant Christian churches, it seems doubtful that Britain would have assumed it feasible summarily to settle the future of that part of Syria now called Palestine. The French claim to all Syria, including Palestine, was very much alive and Russia's interest was keen. It should, moreover, be remembered that the victory over the Ottoman Empire was not a British but an Allied victory. In point of fact, unknown to Arab leaders, Britain, France and Russia in the Sykes-Picot Agreement (April-May, 1916) arranged for internationalization of the area roughly corresponding to Palestine as now constituted.

In January, 1918, the "Hogarth Message" assured Hussein that the British Government was "determined that the Arab race shall be given full opportunity of once again forming a nation in the world" and urged Arab unity as prerequisite. Also, His Majesty's Government was "determined that in so far as is compatible with the freedom of the existing population, both economic and political, no obstacle should be put in the way of the realization" of the ideal of "a return of Jews to Palestine."⁴ The "Declaration to the Seven" (a reply to inquiry from prominent Arabs in Cairo) in the following June stated that it would be the policy of the British Government that the future government of the regions formerly under Turkish do-

minion, occupied by the Allies, "should be based upon the principle of the consent of the governed."⁵

The Committee above referred to concluded its report with the judgment that it was

"evident from these statements that His Majesty's Government were not free to dispose of Palestine without regard for the wishes and interests of the inhabitants of Palestine, and that these statements must all be taken into account in any attempt to estimate the responsibilities which—upon any interpretation of the Correspondence—His Majesty's Government have incurred towards those inhabitants as a result of the Correspondence."⁶

The Balfour Declaration

On November 2, 1917, the British Government made the following statement, through Arthur J. Balfour, then Foreign Secretary, in a letter addressed to Lord Rothschild:

"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 existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

This declaration was the result of much consultation and its meaning has been as hotly debated as that of the McMahon letters. A Zionist draft had read "that Palestine should be reconstituted as the National Home of the Jewish people." The phrase "a national home" was an innovation in diplomatic language and it has been urged that the coining of this new expression indicates that the familiar terms "commonwealth" and "state" had been weighed and considered inapplicable. The use of the word "national" seems, nevertheless, significant. The description of the 91 per cent Arab majority of the Palestine population as "non-Jewish communities" suggests that a special position was being accorded the Jewish minority. The difference between the "civil and religious rights" reserved to Arabs and the "rights and political status" guaranteed to Jews in other countries was later pointed up by the Italian endorsement of a "Jewish national center" which, in contrast, stipulated "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." (Italics ours.)

The Declaration has been interpreted as authorizing only a Jewish cultural center. However, in many countries such Jewish centers flourished at the time. In Palestine itself settlements—some primarily religious—existed which might readily have been expanded. The Royal Commission says of the oft-quoted 1922 Churchill Memorandum defining the "national home" that "though the phraseology was clearly intended to conciliate, as far as might be, Arab antagonism to the National Home, there is nothing in it to prohibit the ultimate establishment of a Jewish State, and Mr. Churchill himself has told us in evidence that no such prohibition was intended."⁶ The Commission concluded:

"Thus His Majesty's Government evidently realized that a Jewish State might in course of time be established, but it was not in a position to say that this would happen, still less to bring it about of its own motion."⁷

It records the Jewish understanding that "in the course of time" the National Home might develop into a Jewish State if the experiment of establishing it should succeed and a sufficient number of Jews should go to Palestine. This suggests the core of British optimism about results.

² Report of a Committee set up to consider Certain Correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon and the Sherif of Mecca in 1915 and 1916. March 16, 1939. Cmd. 5974. P. 10.

³ Correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon . . . and The Sherif Hussein of Mecca, July 1915-March 1916. Cmd. 5957. P. 8. (Italics ours.)

⁴ Statements made on behalf of His Majesty's Government during the year 1918 in regard to the Future Status of certain parts of the Ottoman Empire. Cmd. 5964. P. 6. (Italics ours.)

⁵ Report of a Committee. Op. cit. P. 11.

⁶ Op. cit., p. 33.

⁷ Ibid, p. 24.

Nothing in Britain's long experience, and indeed in the history of colonization—including Jewish projects—forecasts the rate at which Jewish settlement has gone forward.

The strategic position at the Eastern end of the Mediterranean was an important factor in the British course of action. German influence had penetrated the Ottoman Empire to an extent that caused serious concern to the British Government. In 1968 control of the Suez Canal will revert to the independent Egyptian Government. A proposal to build a supplementary canal from the Palestinian coast to the Gulf of Aqaba had been broached. Roads, railways and airlines were contemplated that would make the country a hub of east-west communications important commercially, politically and militarily. An oil pipeline runs from the Mosul field to Haifa. The security of such a confluence of strategic routes could not be left to chance. A strong, modern community which would owe its very existence to Great Britain would bolster the defense of the new and inexperienced Arab states. Britain's backing for the Zionist venture would disallow that of Germany or Turkey, both of whom were ready in 1917 to deal with Zionist leaders.⁸

It was doubtless argued that the two Semitic-language peoples in time would coalesce. Anticipation that arrangements agreeable to the Arabs would be feasible is implicit in the economic arguments used with Hussein. The Allies had publicly repudiated all conqueror's rights and an arrangement that would too closely resemble a protectorate was likely to meet with opposition from British liberals. The circumstances of the Dreyfus case and the suffering of Jews in Eastern Europe had evoked much sympathy in England. The British public would receive with approval a project to relieve the oppression of the Jewish people.

In the early stages a definite effort was made by Zionist leaders to moderate the public expression of their expectations, under admonition from British Government officials. The Report of the American (King-Crane) Commission to the American Secretariat at the Peace Conference in 1919 pointed out that "a national home for the Jewish people is not equivalent to making Palestine into a Jewish state." In the Churchill Memorandum of June 3, 1922, the British Government drew attention to "the fact that the terms of the Declaration referred to do not contemplate that Palestine as a whole should be converted into a Jewish National Home, but that such a Home should be founded in Palestine." Moderate leaders among Zionists have recognized the advantages of deliberation and have stressed caution and conciliation. But the enthusiasm of the Diaspora, Zionist propaganda, the Polish depression, and Nazi persecution have combined to rush the project. The inconclusiveness of the British Government's attitude, due to internal disagreement, has left the situation open to conflicting interpretations.

The Jews in Palestine

The Zionist Organization was established in 1897 by the first Jewish Congress held at Basle under the leadership of Theodor Herzl.⁹ The Basle Program stated: "The aim of Zionism is to create for the Jewish people a publicly recognized and legally secured home in Palestine."

In accordance with Herzl's plan for colonial development an "appropriate Jewish agency" was authorized by the Palestine Mandate to advise and cooperate 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," and "to assist and take part in the development of the country." "Close settlement by Jews on the land" was to be encouraged; the Administration might arrange with the Jewish agency to construct or operate public works, services and utilities, and to develop any of the natural resources of the country. English, Arabic and Hebrew were to be official languages. Each community might maintain its own schools.

The Zionist Organization was later superseded as the colonizing agent in Palestine for the Jewish people by The Jewish Agency in whose membership Non-Zionists were included, although they have been inactive in recent years. The Jewish Agency represents the Jewish people in all matters affecting the National Home, and the National Council of Jews in Palestine acts for Jews in that country in all phases of Jewish relationships with the Administration. The elected General Assembly and the National Executive Council (Va'ad Leumi) chosen by the Assembly constitute the responsible government of the National Home, and its religious affairs are administered by the Rabbinical Council. The Royal Commission states that the Va'ad Leumi and the elected Committees of towns and villages were entitled by law to levy taxation by annual budgets and to maintain social services, especially in the fields of public health and education. The regulations provided, of course, for their control by the Government of Palestine, especially with regard to finance.

A Jewish population of nine per cent in 1919 had risen in October, 1943, to 35 per cent of Palestine's total. Zionist colonization was characterized by extensive successful soil reclamation and crop substitution as well as industrial expansion, and development of commerce and shipping. One-third of the Jewish population is organized in cooperatives of one kind or another. The Jewish National Fund has invested \$30,000,000 in land acquisition, land improvement, afforestation and water supply. Land owned by the Fund is inalienable and is leased, never sold, to Jewish settlers, who must agree to cultivate it themselves. The total Jewish investment since the end of World War I has been \$400,000,000. The social services have made a magnificent and successful attack upon ignorance, poverty, and especially disease. The whole project has called forth the most extraordinary devotion and enduring labor.

Concessions for development of the power resources of the two main rivers of Palestine were awarded to Zionist enterprise, and projects of electrification and irrigation are in some cases completed, in others still in plan. Use of the mineral resources of the Dead Sea is already fairly well developed. Sustained immigration is the crucial feature of the program. It is of the essence of the Zionist concept that Palestine shall offer a permanent solution for the Jews, marked by an integration of physical, psychological and social factors.

The Arabs' Case¹⁰

The Arabs' case is fundamentally that of the right of an indigenous population to its home soil. Since the Arab conquest in 640 A.D. Arabs have been settled in Palestine. They claim uninterrupted occupation by their fathers from

⁸ The 1921 Report of the Zionist Organization's Executive states that in the first formal negotiations Zionist leaders made it clear that they envisaged a British protectorate.

⁹ "Zionism as a political and secular movement arose among the secularized Jewish intelligentsia of central Europe as a reaction to economic and political factors, but it quickly became the form into which was cast the medieval religious Zionist fervor of the east European and oriental Jew." (Hans Kohn: *Revolutions and Dictatorships*.)

¹⁰ For statements of the Arab argument see Antonius, George: *The Arab Awakening*; Hocking, William E.: *The Spirit of World Politics*; his letter in *New York Times*, Apr. 2, 1944; Jeffries, J. M. N.: *Palestine: The Reality*.

times antedating the Hebrew invasion which is related in the *Old Testament*.¹¹

For the past 20 years Arab representatives have made unremitting appeal to the right of self-determination as publicized by President Wilson and authenticated in the Covenant of the League of Nations. With the British Government and before world opinion they argue that Article 22 of the Covenant specifically applied this right to them. It reads in part:

"Certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent 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 the principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory."

By this clause the Turkish territories were differentiated from other, less advanced, mandated areas. Article 20 of the same document required that

"The Members of the League severally agree that this Covenant is accepted as abrogating all obligations or understandings *inter se* which are inconsistent with the terms thereof. . . ."

and the Arabs are convinced that the Balfour Declaration and the Sykes-Picot Agreement—are thus inconsistent and should therefore have been cancelled.

The Arabs argue that the Mandate itself is an injustice and a betrayal; that it contravenes the stated purpose of the League by first depriving them of control of immigration and then imposing alien settlement with privileged status which aims at eventual control by majority rule, reducing them to a minority in their own land. No machinery exists for appeal from the Mandate by a mandated population. ✓The Permanent Mandates Commission's supervisory role is advisory only. ✓There is no court before which the Arab case can be brought except by the Mandatory itself. The British Government has refused to go back of the Mandate in response to appeals. The disillusion, exasperation and bitterness engendered in the Arab population of Palestine by this situation developed into violence against the Jews and at length, in 1933, into attack upon the Government, and in 1936 into open rebellion.

Beyond the fundamental injustice which they charge, the Arabs contend (1) that a remote historical connection terminated over 18 centuries ago cannot now confer any right to territory; (2) that, except for an 80-year period of the reigns of Kings David and Solomon, during Israel's existence as a nation in Palestine its territory was confined to the hill country, whereas the main Zionist settlement is in the fertile coastal plain; (3) that the land cannot support such heavy immigration and that Arabs are being and increasingly will be dispossessed; (4) that Arab prosperity is due largely to the release of Arab initiative following the removal of Turkish domination. Possible material benefit has no weight in the balance against their independence and desire to determine their own culture pattern. They recall the "golden age" of the Arab peoples and they intensely desire to share in the Arabic renaissance. They claim that Islam has shown religious tolerance toward the Jews throughout its history. And they resent what they consider a Western attempt to right at Moslem expense a situation originally created by Christian intolerance.

The Zionist argument that the Emir Feisal committed the Arabs to cooperation with reference to the Jewish Homeland

¹¹ It has been pointed out that Moslems believe as a matter of faith that the Jews and earliest Christians were good Moslems, and insist that Palestine was thus Moslem in faith from Abraham to Jesus.

is rejected on the ground that the pact with Dr. Weizmann signed in January, 1919, was invalidated by the Emir's proviso making its implementation contingent on full realization of Arab independence; and further that he had no authority to sign away Palestine's independence. The General Syrian Congress on July 2, 1919, with Palestinian delegates participating, adopted its Damascus Program which repudiated the Sykes-Picot Agreement, the Balfour Declaration, and any plan for partition of Syria or for a Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine.

There seems to be no doubt that Axis encouragement and aid were accepted by Arab Nationalist leaders. Such action was, of course, exceedingly objectionable to the British Government and constituted a serious danger to United Nations interests. However, the part played by Axis interests in the present Palestine situation can be over-emphasized.

The Christian Minorities

The Christian Arabs of Palestine have taken the side of their Moslem brethren, with certain reservations. Other sects in the country are, on the whole, willing to accept a Moslem state. To some extent this is due to their weakness as small minorities. A prominent member of the Protestant community, since deceased, stated that his people felt the economic and cultural pressure of Zionism and feared a materialistic domination unsympathetic to Christianity.

The Palestine Administration

There appears to have been a sincere effort on the part of the Mandatory Government in Palestine to maintain impartial administration. Vacillation between conciliation and repression, however, has brought upon the Administration the censure of the Permanent Mandates Commission. Its unenviable position under the Mandate is described by the Royal Commission thus: "poised . . . above two irreconcilable communities, compelled to follow a path between them marked out by an elaborate, yet not very lucid, legal instrument, watched at every step it takes by both contending parties inside the country and watched from outside by experienced critics on the Permanent Mandates Commission and by multitudes of Jews throughout the world."¹²

From 1922 to 1941, inclusive, 315,985 Jews entered Palestine. Between 1932 and 1938, according to British official figures, the number was 219,115. Between 1922 and 1938 imports rose from £7.2 millions to £13.6 millions, exports from £1.6 millions to £5.0 millions. Of the exports some 80 per cent were citrus fruits, and Arab orange groves were nearly as extensive as Jewish. During the 'thirties, with the influx of refugees from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia, industry developed. The population in 1942 was 1,613,376 of whom 992,063 were Moslems, 126,501 Christians and 481,706 Jews. Arabs, both Moslem and Christian, totaled approximately 1,110,000.

Of the 350,000 increase in the Arab population of Palestine between 1920 and 1937 roughly nine-tenths is attributable to natural increase. Regarding the economic effect on the Arab community of Jewish immigration the Royal Commission said that the import of Jewish capital had had a "general fructifying effect on the economic life of the whole country," making possible the expansion of Arab industry and citriculture and the improvement of methods of cultivation, and giving employment to Arab

¹² *Op. cit.*, p. 136.

labor. The reclamation and anti-malarial work of the Jewish colonies has benefited the whole population of the affected areas, and Jewish social services have aided the general population to a certain extent. A beneficial result is attested by the disproportionate increase in the Arab population of the urban areas most affected by Jewish development. The Commission warned, however, that such benefits depend on the Homeland's continued prosperity and are endangered by a continued widening of the political gulf between Jew and Arab.¹³ The war has brought an extension of Palestine's prosperity and its industry. Jewish enterprise has taken an active part in the industrial development, and contributed largely to the success of the Middle East Supply Center's activities.

Repeated efforts to associate Palestinians, Jewish and Arab, with the Administration in representative capacities in such manner as to develop "self-governing institutions" for the country as a whole have been wrecked by the impossibility, on the one hand, of reconciling Jews to minority representation, because Arab preponderance would preclude the National Home, and on the other hand, of reconciling Arabs to less than majority representation, because it would eliminate hope of Arab independence.

In the spring of 1918, with the war still in progress, the Military Administration still governing and the Mandate still under consideration, a Zionist Commission empowered by the British Government to travel in Palestine, investigate and report on the prospects for a National Home, and develop friendly relations with the Arabs, visited the country. The Royal Commission reports that this Zionist body desired that Jews "should at once participate in the Military Administration: that there should be a Land Commission, with experts nominated by the Jewish Organization 'to ascertain the resources of Palestine.'" Among other things, "they desired to select and supplement the pay of Jewish candidates for the Police. They demanded and began to train their own Military Defence Force." At that early stage "there was in effect a separate Jewish Judiciary," and "it was obvious that the Jews had created a very efficient intelligence department, from which (as is indeed the case today [1937]) the Administration could keep little secret."¹⁴

In 1920 the Chief Administrator recommended to the Home Government that the Zionist Commission be eliminated. The privileges accorded the Commission, he said, had "firmly and absolutely convinced the non-Jewish element of our partiality," and there would be danger of revolution if exclusively Jewish labor were employed on Government projects and Government lands were handed over to the Zionist Organization. He urged, further, that great works of electrification, road and port building ought properly to be carried out by the Government and not by one section of the population.

In 1937, however, the Royal Commission said of the Jewish Agency: "In fact there is no branch of the Administration with which the Agency does not concern itself." But

"we do not think the Agency is open to criticism on this ground. . . . The words of Article 4 [of the Mandate] entitle the Agency to advise the Government and cooperate with it in almost anything that may affect the interests of the Jewish population in Palestine.

" . . . The Agency is obviously not a 'governing' body: it can only advise and cooperate in a certain wide field. But, allied as it is with the *Va'ad Leumi*, and commanding the allegiance of the great majority of the Jews in Palestine, it unquestionably

exercises, both in Jerusalem and in London, a considerable influence on the conduct of the Government."

. . . This powerful and efficient organization amounts, in fact, to a Government existing side by side with the Mandatory Government."¹⁵

The Supreme Moslem Council was later established in an effort to equalize this situation.

The unequal economic status of the two communities is a source of embarrassment to the Administration. The Jewish section is a highly developed Western society set down in the midst of a predominantly primitive—while not lacking in intellectual potential—Asiatic community. The Jewish immigrants come from different countries and represent all classes and activities, "a complete society in miniature," according to Sir Herbert Samuel. They are selected, trained, controlled and financed. Young, enthusiastic idealists predominate. The average in education is very high. They already possess "an elaborate social and political organization." The community has the added advantage of a highly integrated, scientifically organized educational system, well financed and supplied with trained personnel. The Arabs depend largely on Government educational effort, hampered as it is by lack of trained teachers and by an insufficiency of funds.

Serious complications grow out of the problems already existing in the feudal type of Arab economy and the incredibly involved medieval system of land tenure. The latter places almost unparalleled difficulties in the way of land title verification, survey and registration. Popular resentment arises from the fact that sale of land to Jews displaces the *jellab*, who under the Arab tenure has always remained on the land regardless of changes in ownership.

Temporary and partial restrictions upon Jewish immigration have proved insufficient to allay Arab violence. The criterion of "economic absorptive capacity" for control of immigration was supplemented by that of "the political high level," which inevitably led to cessation of immigration. The Royal Commission's suggestion of partition into a Jewish and an Arab state was considered by the Palestine Partition Commission, upon examination, to be unworkable, as well as unacceptable to both factions. No feasible boundaries were found for the Jewish state that would be suited to defense. Nor could any be discovered that would not leave a small Jewish minority in the Arab state and a relatively large Arab minority in the Jewish state. Population resettlement offered no solution since the land necessary for compensation on any large scale was unavailable.

The "White Paper"

In May, 1939, the British Government made a public Statement of Policy (popularly called "The White Paper"). The three "main obligations" under the Mandate were reviewed: (1) to cultivate "such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people," facilitate Jewish immigration under suitable conditions, and encourage close settlement by Jews on the land; (2) to safeguard the civil and religious rights of all inhabitants and ensure that the rights and position of other sections are not prejudiced and (3) to advance the development of self-governing institutions. The Government stated its belief 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" and declared "unequivocally

¹³ *Op. cit.*, pp. 125-130.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

that it is not part of their policy that Palestine should become a Jewish State" or "that the Arab population should be made the subjects of a Jewish State against their will." Since the Government could "not agree that the McMahon correspondence forms a just basis for the claim that Palestine should be converted into an Arab State" and since a Jewish National Home had been definitely established, an independent Palestine State would be established within ten years, Arabs and Jews sharing in the government. Jewish immigration must cease on March 31, 1944, and would not be resumed except with Arab consent. (An indefinite time extension has been given for the uncompleted immigration quota of Jews and an extra 25,000 European refugees.) Transfer of Arab land to Jews was prohibited in some areas; in others it was restricted. It was pointed out that for the establishment of an independent State and relinquishment of the Mandatory the first requisite was such relations between Arabs and Jews as would make good government possible.

Several of the numerous investigating commissions sent to Palestine by the British Government have reported on the economic absorptive capacity of the land. Concentration of land ownership was already a cause for concern prior to Jewish settlement. Land surveys have been and are being made, together with extensive search for subsoil water and study of possible reform of the land tenure system, preparatory to planned agricultural development under Government auspices.

The shortage of land was attributed by the Partition Commission not so much to the sale of land to Jews, in view of their extensive reclamation of areas held to be uncultivable, as to the high Arab birth rate, the cessation of Turkish conscription and growing restrictions abroad on immigration—particularly in the Western countries. It would, however, be increasingly aggravated by the rapid natural increase of the indigenous population. The 1931 Report of the Census of Palestine pointed out that "nearly a quarter of the agriculturists would be unable to maintain their present standard of life if they were unable to find a secondary means of subsistence." The Commission concluded that if the Arab rural population continues to increase at its present rate, the demand for such supplementary employment, and even the pressure to leave the land and seek for whole-time employment in the towns, will be intensified—quite apart from any further acquisition of land by the Jews. The future for the Arab population is therefore already menacing and since, in the main, available capital is Jewish, they would be faced with the prospect of greater economic hardship if Jewish immigration should be completely closed down. The Commission recommended that alienation of land be permitted only in districts where extensive cultivation could be replaced by intensive farming. The only basis for expansion was found to be in the coastal plain, where land transfer is still permitted.¹⁶

Jewish Attitudes Toward Zionism

The strength of the movement in America for a Jewish homeland in Palestine results from the traditional role of that tiny strip of land in the life of the Jewish people. Palestine to the religious Jew is not merely a place; it is an idea. Dr. Louis Finkelstein, president of the American Jewish Theological Seminary, has put the matter in a way to give to non-Jews the "feel" of this deathless attachment to that ancient land:

"For the Jewish religion, Palestine is the land of the Lord, set aside from the beginning as a unique sanctuary for distinctive forms of communion with God. A large part of Jewish ritual law was formulated especially for life in Palestine. The sanctity of Palestine . . . derives from the fact that the land shares forever the holiness of the Temple. Just as it is possible for a Jew to worship in private, and yet preferable that he do so in the synagogues; and as he may pray in any language, but is enjoined to do so in Hebrew; so, while Judaism can be practiced and followed with devotion anywhere, especial merit attaches to those 'who dwell in the Holy Land, reading the *Shema* morning and evening, and speaking the Hebrew tongue.'¹⁷

Rabbi William H. Fineshriber sees Jewish unity as a matter of faith irrespective of dwelling-place or nationality. In testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, he said: "When Jews prayed and today pray for restoration to Jerusalem, mark you, Jerusalem, not Palestine, they pray not because of an impelling Jewish national consciousness desirous of fulfillment in a Jewish State, but because Jerusalem and Zion are symbols of our faith."¹⁸ To reconstitute a Jewish commonwealth now would be "to divert that ancient and universal faith into secular channels, into the channels of nationalism."¹⁹

A radically different concept appears in the testimony of Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, chairman of the Executive Committee of the American Zionist Emergency Council. He speaks of the "ideal of national restoration" as dating from the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. And further: "The Jewish people are not planning to set up a theocratic state in Palestine. The Jewish people are not planning to set up a racial state in Palestine. Zionism is a secular concept."²⁰

Jewish opinion is united on the point that Palestine must by some arrangement be kept open as a haven of refuge. There is, however, heated controversy over nationalistic aspirations in Palestine. The cleavage is one aspect only of a fundamental conflict in Jewish views of Jewish life and its future. On the one hand there is the contention that the normal status of the Jews is that of a national group. Opposed to this is the view that Jews are essentially a religious community which long ago outgrew and dropped all nationalistic implications; that the genius of the Jew lies in his perception of a religion of universal values. On these different conceptions are based the Zionist and the Anti-Zionist Jewish positions.

The Zionist Position

The Zionist argument that the Jews are essentially a nation and that the problems of individual Jews and of Jewish communities arise from the "national" problem of homelessness finds the remedy in the establishment of a national home and national sovereignty. The late Justice Brandeis, who was a leading exponent of Zionism, in 1915 expressed this Jewish feeling. Jews desire in Palestine, he said:

"a legally secured home, where they may live together and lead a Jewish life, where they may expect ultimately to constitute a majority of the population, and may look forward to what we should call home rule. The Zionists seek to establish this home in Palestine because they are convinced that the undying longing of Jews for Palestine is a fact of deepest significance; . . . They believe that there only can Jewish life be fully protected from the forces of disintegration; that there alone can the Jewish spirit reach its full and natural development; and that by securing for those Jews who wish to settle in Palestine the opportunity to do so, not only those Jews, but all other Jews will

¹⁷ "Reflections on Judaism, Zionism and an Enduring Peace," by Louis Finkelstein. *The New Palestine*, May 21, 1943.

¹⁸ Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives on H. Res. 418 and H. Res. 419, p. 349.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25, 168.

¹⁶ Palestine Partition Commission Report. Cmd. 5854. 1938.

be benefited and that the long perplexing Jewish Problem will, at last, find solution.⁷⁰

Many Jews after the war, it is argued, will be unable or unwilling to live in places where they have suffered persecution and brutality. It is not anticipated that the immigration restrictions of Western countries will be appreciably relaxed.

The latest official statement of the Zionist program is that of the American Jewish Conference, in which a large number of organizations participated, September 1, 1943:

"We call for the fulfillment of the Balfour Declaration and of the Mandate for Palestine whose intent and underlying purpose, based on the 'historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine,' was to constitute Palestine as the Jewish Commonwealth.

"We demand the immediate withdrawal in its entirety of the Palestine White Paper of May, 1939, with its unwarranted restrictions on Jewish immigration and land settlement. The White Paper is a violation of the rights accorded to the Jewish people under the Mandate for Palestine. It was characterized by Mr. Winston Churchill in the House of Commons as 'a breach and a repudiation of the Balfour Declaration.' The permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations refused to recognize its legality or its moral validity.

"The Conference demands that the gates of Palestine be opened to Jewish immigration, and that the Jewish Agency, recognized under the Mandate as the authorized representative of the Jewish people, be vested with authority to direct and regulate immigration into Palestine, to develop to the maximum the agricultural and industrial possibilities and the natural resources of the country, and to utilize its uncultivated and unoccupied lands for Jewish colonization and for the benefit of the country as a whole.

"The measures here urged constitute the essential prerequisites for the attainment of a Jewish majority and for the re-creation of the Jewish Commonwealth."

The Resolution pledged "the Jewish people" to "scrupulous regard" for Arab religious, linguistic and cultural rights and "civil and religious equality."

According to the American Jewish Yearbook for 1943-1944 registered Zionists numbered 59,000 and affiliated or constituent organizations swelled the total to 207,000.

This figure represents considerable membership duplication. There are some 5,280,000 Jews in the United States. It should be said, however, that these figures give no adequate measure of Zionist sentiment. Support is widely based and funds come in large numbers of small contributions.

Emphases within Zionism regarding the Homeland's development are varied. They range from middle class settlement with private enterprise to revolutionary socialism and include the idea of a bi-national state with political parity as between the Arab and Jewish communities. A "moderate" group led by Dr. Judah Magnes of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem which would subordinate political ambition to cultural and spiritual ends commands slight support. Revisionist Zionism demands mass Jewish immigration to form a majority in both Palestine and Trans-Jordan, but its activity has been hampered by the need for British protection. Latterly, extreme Zionist partisans have been guilty of provocation and violence, but in the main the Jewish people have maintained an admirable self control so far as physical violence is concerned. From reliable sources, however, come reports of extensive arming.

Anti-Zionist Positions

From the first there was fear among the Jews of Europe lest Zionism harm the national position of their communities. The most important opponents of Zionism in America are found among Reform rabbis and laymen, some of

whom read in its program despair of democracy and of moral development. In their thinking the religious character of the community is emphasized above cultural or ethnic solidarity, and nationality in the country of one's citizenship is stressed.

The American Council for Judaism, recently established and enrolling about 5,000 members, is taking the lead in organizing Anti-Zionist opinion among Jews. Its Statement of Principles says:

"For our fellow Jew we ask only this: equality of rights and obligations with their fellow nationals."

This, it is explained, means

"equality in the countries in which we live and choose to remain; equality to return to those lands from which Jews have been forcibly driven; equality to migrate wherever there is an opportunity for migration.

"We ask for no special privileges for Jews anywhere in the world. We will resist to the utmost the imposition of any disabilities on Jews anywhere in the world. There is no compromise on this basic demand."⁷¹

'Racist theories and nationalistic philosophies,' the Council argues, long ago "became obsolete as realities in Jewish history." "We believe that the Jew will rise or fall with the extension or contraction of the great liberal forces of civilization."⁷²

The Council's Statement also includes the following:

"We look forward to the ultimate establishment of a democratic autonomous government in Palestine, wherein Jews, Moslems and Christians shall be justly represented; every man enjoying equal rights and sharing equal responsibilities; a democratic government in which our fellow Jews shall be free Palestinians whose religion is Judaism even as we are Americans whose religion is Judaism."

Lessing J. Rosenwald, President of the Council, has said: "For the Jews to become a majority they must be given a preferential position in Palestine, and this preferential position must be created over what is now a majority, the Arab population. . . . Can the Jews have a preferred status in Palestine and an equal status elsewhere?"⁷³

In the varied comment in Jewish publications appear numerous warnings. That of Oscar I. Janowsky, a leading Zionist, in *The Menorah-Journal* reinforces a note sounded by British investigators. He said:

"To dismiss Arab nationalism in Palestine as the concoction of a handful of rapacious landlords and reactionary priests is to indulge in self-delusion. For two decades scores of thousands of Arab youth have been indoctrinated with nationalist sentiments in the schools; . . . These intellectuals and the Arab middle class . . . are the twin pillars of Arab nationalism. That their influence will wane, or that the Arab masses will remain lethargic, are assumptions not borne out by similar developments in other countries."

Non-Zionist Positions

The term "Non-Zionist" signifies non-affiliation with Zionist organizations. Many Non-Zionists are interested in the cultural and religious phases of the Zionist program and its possibilities in providing a place of refuge but are opposed to its political emphasis. Some do not object to a Jewish State with certain reservations; but the majority prefer a bi-national state and would approve mandatory or international administration.

Positions in Opposition to the White Paper

Zionist opposition to the White Paper is based in the main on the fact that stoppage of immigration renders the achievement of a Jewish State practically impossible by placing the attainment of a majority beyond reach. It is

⁷¹ *Information Bulletin of the American Council for Judaism, Inc.*, January 15, 1944. (Italics theirs.)

⁷² American Council for Judaism Interpretive Pamphlet No. 1.

⁷³ *Let Us Reason Together*. Interpretive Pamphlet No. 3.

⁷⁰ *The Jewish Problem: How to Solve It*, p. 9.

charged, as has been noted in the American Jewish Conference Statement quoted above, that this is a nullification of the Mandate, and of the Balfour Declaration endorsed by 52 national governments. The judgment of the Permanent Mandates Commission is cited, that the new policy does not accord with previous interpretations of the Mandate or with any possible interpretation.

Anti-Zionist opposition to the White Paper is based on the "fundamental fact" that proposals which exclude Jews as Jews, from right of entry and acquisition of land "do violence to the fundamental concept of democratic equality and thus to the very purposes and ideals to which the United Nations are pledged."²⁴

Practical Difficulties in Palestine

In considering the Zionist problem it is well to keep in mind that the welfare and economic health of Palestine and of the Jewish colonies there are separate questions from the rescue of war refugees. It has been urged that a slower and steadier expansion might produce a more stable future.

In view of Arab predominance in the region it would seem that Arab compliance in the Zionist plan is a prerequisite to be secured at any cost. The Royal Commission noted that the Arabs "detected, too, in some of those young newcomers an arrogance which seemed to suggest that they felt themselves to be members of a superior race, destined before long to be masters of the country."²⁵

Raphael Straus, a Jewish social historian for some years resident in Palestine, speaks of a "preponderant" urban population which "obviously upsets the entire program of agricultural colonization" and exaggerates the cost of public works, education and public security.²⁶ Further comment on the economic phase appears in the following passage from the Report of the Royal Commission:

"Much of the expenditure has been uneconomic. For some of the capital provided no return could be expected; for the rest only a small and possibly long-delayed return. . . . But, if it was to realize its promoters' dreams within measurable time, it would need a more normal economic basis; it would need to be regarded as a 'sound proposition' and attract investment in the usual way of business."²⁷

For that purpose the welding of the population into a unit, and the lessening of the economic, social and intellectual distance between groups is primary. An obstacle to effective Government action toward reconciliation was erected in the sanctioning of separate systems of education on different levels of financial support and supply of trained personnel. As was inevitable, both are schools of nationalism which perpetuate the conflict. The Jews have hoped to see a greater part of the Jewish population cultivate the land and a larger part of the Arab population engage in trade and industry. Although recent trends show increased industrial occupation among Arabs, a heavy proportion of urban workers appears among Jewish immigrants.²⁸

Palestine's Absorptive Potential

Palestine, as constituted under the British Mandate, covers an area of 10,429 square miles. Trans-Jordan,

which up to 1922 was a part of Palestine, comprises 37,740 square miles. The fertile land has been desolated by centuries of invasion, exploitation and excessive soil erosion. Many types of reclamation and soil conservation must be brought into operation before the land can yield sustenance to the maximum population it could support—swamp drainage, reforestation, soil leaching, water conservation and, most important, extensive irrigation.

Estimates of the population absorptive capacity of Palestine vary widely. Most commonly heard is the Zionist statement that unrestricted entry of two million Jews is immediately feasible. W. C. Lowdermilk of the United States Soil Conservation Service, says that "full utilization of the Jordan Valley depression and adjoining drainage areas for reclamation and power will in time provide farms, industry and security for at least four million Jewish refugees from Europe, in addition to the 1,800,000 Arabs and Jews already in Palestine and Trans-Jordan."²⁹

Dr. Lowdermilk's project calls for "diversion of the sweet waters of the Upper Jordan and of the Yarmuk and Zerqa Rivers into open canals or closed conduits running around the slopes of the Jordan Valley," and of waters above the Huleh, together with the introduction of Mediterranean waters by canal and tunnel into the Jordan gorge to replenish the Dead Sea and supply power.

There seems little doubt that modern engineering, given the capital, could accomplish the irrigation of large areas of Palestine. Also, Jewish enterprise and devoted labor have achieved already much that was thought to be impossible. Difficulty would arise at the point of making the benefits from the development of the country's resources as readily available to the Arab population as to the Jewish. The Jewish settlements, though very costly, are not required to make a return on the investment for many years and then at a very low rate. Similar development is quite beyond the resources of any Arab small proprietor. Nor is the Government in a position to do for the much more numerous Arabs what the Jewish agencies are doing for the Jews. Unless some means can be found to approximately equalize the progress of the two communities in the utilization of resources, according to the Royal Commission, success for the whole Jewish enterprise would be jeopardized.

The Palestine Partition Commission warned that

"the question of markets for the sale of the agricultural produce is one of great importance to all large irrigation and land development projects, whether in the Jordan Valley or elsewhere in Palestine. Markets must be reasonably assured for the additional produce before schemes for bringing large additional areas of land under cultivation can be said to be practicable."³⁰

Concern is expressed lest the process, even if carefully controlled, should result in excessive concentration in production. The future of the citrus industry in Palestine is already the cause of some apprehension. Industry in Palestine is in a large degree dependent on protective tariffs.

Arnold J. Toynbee sees the optimum population as

"a complex product of many factors: the material assets of the country; the energy and enterprise and skill of its inhabitants, including future immigrants; the economic demand of the world at large for the economic assets which Palestine could offer; and the general level of world prosperity, on which the extent and effectiveness of this demand would depend."³¹

Such, in briefest outline, are the major elements in the Palestine controversy.

²⁴ American Council for Judaism. *Information Bulletin*. *Op. cit.*

²⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 52.

²⁶ *Jewish Social Studies*, April, 1943.

²⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 50.

²⁸ The Economic Bureau of the Jewish Agency for Palestine cites the following occupational distribution figures for the country: (in per cent of earners) Jews—agriculture and fishing 19.3, mining, building, industry 27.1, commerce and transport 53.6; Non-Jews—57.6, 15.7 and 26.7 respectively.

²⁹ *Palestine: Land of Promise*. P. 169.

³⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 72.

³¹ *Survey of International Affairs, 1930*, p. 230.