



Palestine:

The Original Sin

By Meir Abelson

There is a fable that at the end of World War II, a visitor from outer space landed in Berlin and stood aghast at the destruction, at the rotting bodies littering the streets, and the sight of survivors begging for bread. He asked a passerby: 'Who did this terrible thing?' The reply was: 'The Allied airmen.' But of course - he didn't know what happened before!

I recall this story whenever I hear or read of the plight of the Palestinians, and the universal condemnation of Israel - by a world that does not know how it all began....



Those were the Days

Zionism did not begin with Theodore Herzl in 1897— the whole history of the Jews is a yearning for a reborn Jewish State. Throughout the 19th century there was worldwide support for the return of the Jews to the Holy Land. Such eminent persons as Queen Victoria, King Edward VII, John Adams, the second President of the United States, General Smuts of South Africa, President Masaryk of Czechoslovakia, British Prime Ministers Lloyd George and Arthur Balfour, President Woodrow Wilson, Benedetto Croce, Italian philosopher and historian, Henri Durant, founder of the Red Cross and author of the Geneva Conventions, Fridtjof Nansen, Norwegian scientist and humanitarian – even the French and Chinese expressed ‘ *full sympathy with the Jewish people in their desire to establish a country for themselves.*’

Report after report of travelers testified as to the barren and desolate state of Palestine. The most famous was Mark Twain, who recorded after his visit in 1867: ‘*Stirring scenes occur in the valley (Jezreel) no more. There is not a solitary village throughout its whole extent – not for thirty miles in*

either direction. ..One may ride ten miles hereabouts and not see ten human beings.’ Of Galilee he wrote of ‘...these unpeopled deserts, these rusty mounds of barrenness...’ Nazareth he described as ‘forlorn,’ Jericho as ‘a moldering ruin.’

Arabs Welcome Jews Home

At that time no one had heard of a ‘Palestine Arab people;’ the term was not invented until after 1964 entirely for political reasons. The British Peace Handbook No. 60, published in 1918, declared that ‘...*the people west of the Jordan are not Arabs, but only Arab speaking...In the Gaza district they are mostly of Egyptian origin; elsewhere they are of the most mixed race..... they (the Arabs of Palestine) have little if any national sentiment...they hide their weapons at the call of patriotism..’*

The attitude of the Arabs to the Jewish National Movement was one of almost unanimous approval. In 1906, Farid Kassab, famous Syrian author, expressed the view uniformly held by the Arabs: ‘*The Jews of the Orient are at home. This land is their only fatherland. They don’t know any other.’*

As late as 1920, three years after the Balfour Declaration, the British government issued a ‘Peace Handbook No.162 on Zionism’ for the instruction and information of British officials and representatives throughout the world. It stated unequivocally that Jewish nationalism has been continuous, and refers to the fact that it is ‘the oldest nationalist movement in history.’ No more explicit statement of Jewish aspirations has ever been penned than this official British publication, which is now buried somewhere in the

dusty files of Whitehall.

The Rot Begins

So what happened? How was it possible that in just three years – from 1917 to 1920, (when the first pogrom occurred) Arab goodwill was transmuted into hatred and enmity? In March 1921, Winston Churchill visited Palestine, and met with a formal body calling itself the ‘ Executive Committee of the Haifa Congress of Palestinian Arabs.’ They presented him with a memorandum protesting Zionist activity in Palestine, arguing that Jews were not a nationality but a religion; that they had destroyed Russia, Germany and Austria; and that they took but never gave. They wanted Britain to stop the effort for a Jewish National Home, to stop all Jewish immigration, annul all relevant British laws, and make Palestine part of Syria.

It is important to note that this document - which Churchill rejected - emerged from a population that was mostly given over to lawlessness and banditry, and of which 85% of the men and 93% of the women were illiterate. The rest were mostly a parasitic upper class known as effendis. The ideas of democracy and nationalism were utterly alien to them. From where did they learn of these essentially Western concepts – as well as the jargon of European anti-Semitism, which they expressed so succinctly?

War Against The Jews

In December 9, 1917, General Allenby made his historic entry into Jerusalem. It soon became clear that the British Military Administration was uncompromisingly opposed to the Balfour Declaration.

The Generals who succeeded Allenby looked on

Britain's pro-Zionist commitment as little less than criminal lunacy, and virtually refused to carry out London's orders. Their aim was to promote a federation of Arab states, to include the Hejaz, Syria, Iraq and Palestine, that was to lie, as Egypt had lain, in the political and economic sphere of Britain. Their attitude towards the Jews was hostile; despite the Jewish majority in Jerusalem, two-thirds of the Army-appointed Jerusalem Corporation were Arab and only one-third Jewish.

General Money, who succeeded Allenby, asserted: 'I have asked many people in position – in England and elsewhere – why England has capitulated to the Zionists, but none of them has been able to give me a straight answer.'

Subordinates responded to the cue supplied by their superior officers. Horace Samuel, late Judicial Officer in Palestine, wrote of a medical officer 'who quite frankly and with barely concealed relish announced that 'Jew-baiting had been the sport of kings for centuries and centuries.' 'All told,' – Samuel concluded, the British officers 'regarded the Balfour Declaration as damn nonsense, the Jews as a damn nuisance, and the Arabs as damn good fellows.'

In January 1919, the British Civic Adviser in Jerusalem, C.R. Ashbee, wrote in his diary: '.... the Jew is unthinkable without a bargain, he bears the brand of that mean fellow Jacob on his brow....' On January 1st, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir Henry Wilson, described Chaim Weizmann as 'a clever rogue but a bad face.' On February 3rd a Foreign Office senior official, J.D. Gregory, commenting on anti-Jewish riots in the Ukraine, minuted: 'The Jews deserve all they get;' and when Weizmann went again to see Sir Henry Wilson and protested that the British officers in Palestine were pro-Arab and anti-Zionist, Wilson noted in his

diary that this was 'very likely and quite right!'

In June 1919, General Louis Bols was appointed Military Governor of Jerusalem. When Colonel Patterson, a staunch Zionist friend, heard that Bols had been appointed, he was shocked, and wrote: 'I knew Bols well, having worked with him for two years. I knew him as an out and out anti-Semite, who would leave no stone unturned to destroy the Jewish National Home root and branch.' Bols' Chief of Staff was Colonel Waters Taylor, whose idea was a military government in perpetuity, and who later became an anti-Zionist organizer in London.

The Administration fostered hostility between Arab and Jew. It directly advised the Arabs of Palestine and Egypt to abstain from any concessions to the Jews. It formed the Muslim-Christian Association and used it against the Zionists on the slightest pretext. It established the Muslim Supreme Council as a counterpart to the Zionist Executive. It instructed Arab youths in the technique and tenets of modern nationalism, in order to resist Jewish 'pretences.' The Arabs were supplied with funds, and their arguments ghost-written by Englishmen in high places.

In the same year, the Treaty of Versailles was signed. The view taken throughout by the British delegation – which did **NOT** include the Military - was that, if there were to be a Jewish nationality, it could only be by giving the Jews local habitation, and enabling them to found in Palestine a Jewish State. The official recommendation of the United States government was for the setting up of a Jewish State. A Commission of prominent Americans had been sent by President Wilson to investigate, and their recommendations, adopted by the President and other American delegates without dissent, stated bluntly that 'it is right that Palestine

should become a Jewish State.'

In April 1920 the Supreme Council of the principal Allied Powers met at San Remo to ratify the Mandate. A few months later the Treaty of Sevres was signed between Turkey and the Western Powers. It reiterated the decisions of the nations, ceding Palestine with the proviso that the 'Mandatory will be responsible for putting into effect the Declaration originally made on November 2, 1917 by the British Government and adopted by the other Allied Powers in favor of the establishment in Palestine of the National Home of the Jewish people.' It is important to remember that 'Palestine' was not known as a country but as an administrative district; and that it included both East and West Banks of the river Jordan, Gaza and the Golan.

In 1920, General Bols issued a proclamation – it is not clear why – that the British intended to carry out the provisions of the Mandate. A few weeks later, Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen recorded that Colonel Waters Taylor met with Haj Amin – a violent anti-Jewish agitator - and told him that *'...he had a great opportunity at Easter to show the world that Zionism was unpopular not only with the Palestine Administration but in Whitehall; and if disturbances of sufficient violence occurred at Easter, both General Bols and General Allenby would advocate the abandonment of the Jewish Home.'*

The First British-Inspired Pogroms

Haj Amin took the Colonel's advice and instigated a riot. Agitators addressed the Muslim crowds, urging them forward against the Jews, who had been disarmed. The riot started with cries of 'Kill the Jews!' 'We shall drink the blood of the

Jews!' 'Don't be afraid – the Government is on our side!' The mob rushed into Jerusalem's Jewish Quarter, brandishing knives and clubs. The Government surrounded the Old City with a cordon of police and troops, preventing outside help. The Jews were given over to slaughter, rape, torture and looting for three days before the authorities raised a hand to interfere. Three weeks later, riots in Jaffa and elsewhere left 43 Jews dead.

.Because of Haj Amin's overt role in instigating the pogrom, the British arrested him. However, he escaped and was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment in *absentia*; but a year later Samuel pardoned him.

After a second pogrom in May, 1921, in which looting and murder of Jews spread throughout the country, the British appointed the Haycraft Commission to investigate the cause of the violence. Although the panel concluded that the Arabs had been the aggressors, it rationalized the cause of the attack: 'The fundamental cause of the riots was a feeling among the Arabs of discontent with, and hostility to, the Jews, due to political and economic causes, and with their conception of Zionist policy.....'.

A tremendous wave of protest swept the world. The British, under pressure, removed the top Administrator in Palestine, together with his Chief of Staff. The Military Administration, which had worked indefatigably for three years to foment the Arabs, was disbanded; and its powers transferred to the Colonial Office, a bureau maintained almost entirely for the control of uncivilized tropical or sub-tropical races, and which, by its very nature and interests, could not fail to be opposed to the Mandate. Colonel Patterson remarked grimly: 'Bols went, but the system he planted remained. The anti-Semitic officials he brought with him into

the country remained.'

The First Partition

In 1922 Britain lopped off Trans-Jordan – three-quarters of the mandated territory - and handed it over to the Emir Abdullah of the Hejaz who had marched up with 1,200 nomads and squatted there. So was created the Emirate of Trans-Jordan – later the Kingdom of Jordan. The Mandates Commission was sharply critical, but like the League of Nations itself, it had no teeth. It was not until the Treaty of Lausanne was signed in 1923 that the Mandate was finally placed in British hands. Meanwhile, in Palestine, the British had appointed a Civil Administration to replace the Military Government; local responsibility was vested in a civilian High Commissioner. The first was Sir Herbert Samuel; shortly after his arrival, he held a reception for the members of his staff. The reaction, blurted out of the mouth of one of them was: 'And there I was at Government House, and there was the Union Jack flying as large as life, and a bloody Jew sitting under it.'

The Second Partition

In 1923, Britain unilaterally made territorial concessions to the French in Syria at the expense of the Mandated Territory. She transferred territory in the north, and directly south of Mount Hermon. Also lopped off were the lands of Naphtali, Dan and Manasseh, east of the River Jordan, in addition to the Hauran, ancient granary of Israel, and most of the fertile, well-watered Galilee. Colonel Josiah Wedgwood, a prominent Member of Parliament, wrote that this first partition

of the mandated territory had been actuated by a desire to annoy the Jews. President Wilson rose from his sick bed and cabled the following protest to the British Cabinet:

'The Zionist cause depends on rational northern and eastern boundaries for a self-maintaining, economic development of the country. This means, on the north, Palestine must include the Litany River and the watersheds of the Hermon, and on the east it must include the plains of the Jaulon and the Hauran. Narrower than this is a mutilation...I need not remind you that neither in this country nor in Paris has there been any opposition to the Zionist programme, and to its realization the boundaries I have named are indispensable.' The protests moved the British to recover a few square miles, and to ignore further protests.

The Court Jew

Samuel suffered acutely from his consciousness of being a Jew, causing him to pivot right round to an actual pro-Arab attitude. At the Fifth Session of the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations, he declared that it was 'the fundamental intention of the government' to deal with the Arabs 'as if there had never been a Balfour Declaration.' He even recalled and appointed Haj Amin to the powerful position of Mufti of Jerusalem, in the belief that giving him more responsibility would encourage him to moderate his anti-Jewish incitement. It didn't! Husseini guided and stirred up the Arabs for almost thirty years, and spent his last years in Berlin

during World War II advising Hitler on his plans to 'eliminate the Jewish problem.' His baneful influence lasted until his dying day.

In 1925 Samuel was replaced by Field-Marshal Lord Plumer, under whose rule the old policies remained unchanged. Typical of his rule was the loan of twenty thousand pounds to the Sheba Bedouin in 1928 to quiet their grumbling against the indirect Government refusal to allow land sales to Jews.

The Second Pogrom

Lord Plumer was succeeded in 1928 by Sir John Chancellor, who retired after three years and became an anti-Zionist spokesman in London. The next year, the second bloody massacre of Jews took place. The story was put about that the Jews planned to tear down the Mosque of Omar, and to rebuild the Temple on the site – a tactic that has been used to arouse the Arabs to this day. In the Arab press an anti-Zionist and anti-Jewish campaign was going full blast; the Russian forgery, the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion' was widely circulated – as it is also until today. The High Commissioner was on a visit to London. The acting High Commissioner was Harry Luke, known to be unfriendly to the Jews. Arab agitators toured the country, bringing word from the Mufti to await orders the following Friday.

In this threatening atmosphere, the Government disarmed the Jewish villagers, leaving them defenceless. Once again, the cry went up: *'The Government is with us!'* The police watched as hundreds of screaming fellaheen and Bedouin armed with clubs, knives and guns swarmed through Jerusalem. Whole families were slaughtered, while the police

and British officials, standing on the balcony of Government House, heard the screaming and the shots – and did nothing. For eight days the country was given over to an orgy of slaughter, rape, castration and unspeakable mutilation. The worst barbarisms took place at Hebron, Safed, Jaffa and Motza. The victims – men, women and children - were beaten, stabbed, their limbs amputated, stomachs were ripped open, and women were raped. I have met survivors, who remember recognizing among their assailants Arab ‘friends’, who had been regular guests in their homes. I have an album of horrifying photographs taken in hospital after the pogrom; they show the hacked bodies of the survivors, and amputated hands and fingers— laid out on tables.

Justice, Justice Thou Shalt Pursue

Since the days of the Crusaders, no such massacre of Jews had occurred in Palestine. The Permanent Mandates Commission, which since 1924 had not spared criticism of Britain’s handling of the Mandate, lashed out at the British Government, virtually accusing it of sabotaging the Jewish National Home.

The Government reacted by appointing more Commissions. Incredibly, after long delays, they produced pro-Arab reports. Practically everyone accused of having a hand in the riots was promoted. The highest term of imprisonment imposed for any of the Hebron murders was eighteen months. Typical was the case of a *fellah* who had killed the two young sons of a woman, named Fruma Charkel, by dashing their brains out. He had known the family for years, and had only laughed at the mother’s plea for mercy while the little boys were being battered to death. With her

surviving son she appeared against him, as did the invalid father and other eye-witnesses to the attack. The court freed the Arab, finding 'insufficient evidence...'

In 1930 a Labor Government was in power. The Prime Minister was J. Ramsey MacDonald, who had asserted after a visit to the Middle East in 1922: *'The Arab population do not, or cannot use or develop the resources of Palestine....the country is undeveloped and under populated.'* Arthur Henderson, the Foreign Secretary, was the man who had drawn up a resolution in 1917 approving the Zionists' right *'to form a Free State under International Agreement, where the Jewish people may return and work out their own salvation without interference by those of alien faith and religion.'*

Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness

However, if it is true that power corrupts, the first casualties are truth and principle. In Spring of 1930, the Shaw Commission was the first to report on the 1929 violence. It concluded that, among the immediate causes of the disturbances was the 'enlargement of the Jewish Agency.' In fact, it is doubtful if any of the murderers had ever heard of the Jewish Agency or its enlargement. It held the primary cause to be in essence the crafty way in which the Zionists had taken advantage of the innocent Arabs, who were being deprived of soil and substance. Thus was created the 'landless Arab' fiction, which was to serve the Government of Palestine as a convenient symbol for many years. It found that Palestine was overcrowded, and there was not enough land to go round. (This was two short years after the Government of Palestine had published the statement that, *'the country suffers from a*

lack of population – it is under-cultivated and needs capital.) It recommended the curtailment of Jewish immigration and land purchase, and a Government subsidy to buy up vacant land, which was to be handed over free to the 'landless Arabs' – wherever they might be found.

Lord Snell, a member of the Commission, turned in a minority report. He accused the Administration of encouraging the Arabs *'to believe that they have suffered a great wrong and that the immigrant Jew constitutes a permanent menace to their livelihood and future,'* despite the fact that *'Jewish activities have increased the prosperity of Palestine and raised the standard of life of the Arab worker.'* Far from finding the country overcrowded, he noted that, *'large tracts are lying waste, which should be made available to the Jews.'*

Lloyd George condemned the Commissioners' Report as 'mischievous nonsense.' He declared: *'The report made for the Government, of which I was the head in 1919, by competent and experienced engineers, stated that by well-planned schemes of irrigation one million acres could be added to the cultivable area of Palestine, and that by this plan sixteen persons could be maintained for every one there now.'*

Whitehall then appointed yet another Commission. The Report was published in November 1930 – simultaneously with a Cabinet decision to act on it. It consisted of a symposium of oblique attacks against the Jews, and included all the anti-Semitic conceptions of its day, including the inability of native races to compete with superior Jewish cunning and ability, and the omnivorous greed of the 'rich' Jew for further gain; it suggested that the Jews be prohibited by law from buying more land; it charged that the Jews were introducing Bolshevism into the land; and it demanded that irrigation work of any kind be virtually prohibited.

Evaporation of The National Home

In October 1930 Lord Passfield, the Colonial Secretary, issued a White Paper based on the findings of the two Commissions. It was decidedly pro-Arab and anti-Zionist. It repeated the claim that there was not enough land for newcomers, and recommended limiting Jewish immigration and Jewish ownership of land. This resulted in widespread protests from leaders of public opinion in France, Germany and America, while in the House of Commons David Lloyd George observed: *'They dare not try to kill Zionism directly, but they try to put it in a refrigerator.'* Prominent elder statesmen complained that the White Paper would create a feeling of distrust in British good faith; the major Press added their intense criticism to the storm. As a result, Prime Minister MacDonald produced a letter modifying somewhat the offending provisions; but it later turned out to be meaningless.

In July 1931 Lieut-General Arthur Wauchope was appointed High Commissioner. He was hardly an improvement on his predecessors. During his term of office the disastrous Arab rebellion of 1936-8 took place. A new Report recommended completely prohibiting land purchase by Jews, adding that it was necessary for the Jews to give up what land they already possessed and migrate from Palestine. The Jewish leaders were fuming; and an amended Report was published in July, 1933. It placed land transfers completely under Government control; it stated that the hill Arabs required special protection against Jews, elaborated on the 'landless Arab' problem, and piously referred to the 'displaced' Arab as 'a son of the soil to be replaced on the land of his country.'

By this time the British officials in Palestine regarded themselves as under some kind of duty to sabotage the very policy they were appointed to carry out. The American minister John Haines Holmes, visiting Palestine in 1929 wrote prophetically:

'It may well be discovered, before the tale is done, that the English conquest of Palestine, and the English Government of Palestine under the Mandate, constitute together the greatest tragedy that ever befell the Zionist movement.'

Descent Into Chaos

In 1936 armed revolt broke out again all over Palestine - for the sixth time since British occupation. There was hardly one of the Arab ringleaders, who was not on the Government payroll. *'If one thing stands out from the record of the Mandatory administration,'* conceded the Peel Report, *'it is the leniency with which Arab political agitation, even when carried out to the point of violence and murder, has been treated.'* Three American Senators – Austin, Copeland and Hastings - who visited the country, wrote that *'there are really two strikes going on in Palestine. One is conducted by Arab terrorists, who throw bombs and snipe at passers-by in the streets and highways. The other is conducted silently by the Mandatory Government of Palestine against the proper administration of justice. The prolongation of the terror in the Holy Land is due....to a manifest sympathy for the vandals and assassins displayed by many officers who are sworn to uphold the law....creating a condition, which could not but shock any American observer.'*

Thou Shalt Not Murder

For months, fifteen thousand soldiers had apparently been unable to make safe a few miles of road between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. There had been innumerable hold-ups by armed gangs, in which Jewish passengers had been hauled out of cars and butchered. The Arab press hailed these killers and boasted of further horrors to come. On April 16, 1936 the fuse was lit.

A story was circulated in Jaffa that four Arab men and women had been beheaded by Jews in Tel Aviv. Jaffa resounded with the familiar cry 'The Government is with us!'

By midday the streets were running with Jewish blood; many were slaughtered and mutilated beyond recognition, right under the eyes of the police, who made no effort to interfere. The contagion spread to other parts of the country. The Arab press called for murder and revolt. Nazi flags and pictures of Hitler were prominently displayed in shop windows; and on May 21 the Arab Higher Committee called a general strike. Violent men from Syria, Egypt and Mesopotamia slipped over the border as if it did not exist.

The rioters appeared to possess an inexhaustible supply of weapons and ammunition – most of them brand-new, manufactured in Britain. Gangs threatened Arab shopkeepers and beat up Arab peasants who came into town with their vegetables. 'For an Arab to be suspected of a lukewarm adherence to the nationalist cause,' said Lord Peel, 'is to invite a visit from a body of gunmen.' When the mayor of Beisan displayed unwillingness to swell the terrorists' funds, his young son's throat was slit in reprisal; hundreds of wealthy Arabs fled the country in fear.

Shootings, bombings, and every conceivable form of

violent outrage was daily routine. Bombs were thrown at homes, railway stations and public buildings. Kindergartens and playgrounds were dynamited, tearing little children to pieces. Nurses were slain by snipers as they went on duty. Trains were fired on and wrecked, cinemas blown up; crops burned, trees whose planting represented a lifetime's work were uprooted.

One midnight, a gang invaded the home of a Safed Rabbi. They found his three young children on the veranda and butchered them in their sleep. Their mother, startled by the commotion, ran out and flung herself on her brood; the Arabs shot her without mercy. Her husband, coming on the terrible scene, had barely time to see his family dying before his eyes before a bomb hurled by the retreating intruders decapitated him.

Self Defence Denied

As in previous riots, the Jews were rendered impotent by being forcibly disarmed. Drivers of vehicles could not even carry a club to defend themselves. The police regularly searched Jewish buses and cars, while Arab vehicles passed them, neither examined nor even stopped.

The general tone of the courts can be attested by two examples. Two Arabs positively identified by seven eye-witnesses as having dynamited a cinema in Tel Aviv, murdering three and mangling many others, were given seven days' jail; the murder charges were not even brought up. In another case, some two hundred Arabs armed with knives and iron bars, fell on the Jewish quarter of Tiberias. When the military and police eventually arrived, they 'escorted' the assailants out of the vicinity. On the way the latter broke shop

windows and stoned passersby. The next day the police returned and arrested fifteen Jews.

The Third Partition?

In October 1936 yet another Commission arrived. It held sixty-six meetings and issued its Report in July 1937, recommending partition of Palestine into an Arab and a Jewish State. The British Government expressed agreement with these findings, but in practice it faced three options: to enforce partition, to pull out and leave the Jews and Arabs to fight it out, or to stay and improvise. In the face of strong opposition from all the Palestinian Arabs to the whole idea of partition, the Government decided to stay and improvise. The improvisation took the form of crushing the Arab rebellion, combined with promising them an independent state in the future.

For once, the British action against violence was resolute. Stung by the Peel Commission's severe criticism of its leniency with Arab political agitation, the Government gave the Military the necessary political backing to repress the revolt. When in September, 1937, the District Commissioner of Galilee was assassinated, all the members of the Higher Arab Committee were arrested, and Haj Amin was removed from his post as head of the Supreme Muslim Council. He escaped, dressed as a Bedouin, and made his way to Lebanon, where the French gave him asylum.

The next month, widespread rioting broke out again all over the country, and it developed into a full-scale revolt, which lasted until the end of 1938. Against it the British Government applied severe military repression. The High Commissioner himself was retired, and his place was taken by

Sir Harold MacMichael, who arrived on March 3, 1938. One of his first acts was to return control of the city government of Jerusalem to the Arabs, dismissing the acting mayor, Daniel Auster, and appointing an Arab majority in the Municipal Council. In the official announcement it was made perfectly clear that if Auster had been a Muslim he could have continued as Mayor.

The First Hanging

In April, yet another Commission set out for Palestine. As it arrived, Arab terrorism again stalked the country, with the police and military seemingly powerless to stop it. Peaceful Arabs as well as Jews were slaughtered daily, Jewish villages attacked, and houses, schools and other buildings blown to bits. Arson, stoning and sniping became part of the regular routine. Determined to characterize these events as 'Arab-Jewish clashes,' the Government ordered mass arrests of Jewish workmen and students. Among them was a young boy names Shlomo ben Yosef, who was sentenced to hang for allegedly possessing arms. The Government did not assert that he had killed or injured anyone. He was put to death – on a Jewish holiday.

The new Commission's plan was to reduce the Jewish area to a token 'home' of some 400 square miles in the Sharon Valley. Galilee, Acre and Haifa were to be added to the permanently mandated British area. The British would also take over southern Palestine to protect the Suez Canal and the remainder of the country was to be added to Trans-Jordan as an Arab state under Abdullah.

Encouraged by the Commission's recommendations, the British Government toyed with the idea of even abrogating the Jewish 'token home', altogether repudiating the Balfour

Declaration, and setting up an Arab government permanently allied to Great Britain. Simultaneously, an imposing Arab Congress gathered in Cairo, and threatened Britain with the eternal enmity of all Arabia unless their minimum demands were met. Likewise simultaneously, the Arab rebels in Palestine announced the formation of a 'provisional Arab government' to take over the responsibility for 'law and order, life and limb' in the whole of Palestine. They set up their own courts, issued laws and decrees, and collected taxes. The British looked on passively, while shocking acts of violence were committed, as when 21 Jews were butchered in cold blood on October 22nd in Tiberias, including ten little children who were roasted alive.

* * *

As it became apparent that Britain was about to repudiate its obligations under the Mandate, indignation and anger were voiced, particularly in the United States. In its dying moments, the League of Nations accused Britain of a flagrant breach of its Mandate, calling attention to her 'virtual suspension' of Jewish immigration. In the face of these reactions, and at a time of international crisis in Europe, the British cabinet met on October 19 and announced that no drastic action would be taken against the Jews

In November 1938, the British Government convened the London Conference on the future of Palestine. It broke up in deadlock on March 17, 1939, two days after Hitler's occupation of Prague. But it paved the way for a unilateral

statement from the British Government, which was much more favorable to the Arabs than any official statement since the beginning of the Mandate. This was the White Paper of May 1939, of which the main provisions were: No partition; no Jewish State; an independent Arab State within ten years; Jewish immigration, after five years, would not be allowed *'unless the Arabs of Palestine were prepared to acquiesce in it.'*

The legality of the White Paper, in terms of the Mandate, was not only contested by the Jews. The Permanent Mandates Commission, reporting to the Council of the League, found unanimously 'that the policy set out in the White Paper was not in accordance with the interpretation which, in agreement with the Mandatory Power and the Council, the Commission had placed upon the Palestine Mandate.'

However, the outbreak of war put an end to the League's life, and the Council never met to consider the matter.

In spite of everything, almost the entire Jewish population wholeheartedly supported the British. However, restrictions on immigration were maintained. As the War went on, the horrifying details of Hitler's Final Solution of the Jewish Problem became known; but the gates of the Promised Land remained closed, until Britain relinquished the Mandate in 1948.

Today, many of the old pretexts for Britain's dereliction have been demolished: 'the absorptive capacity of Palestine,' 'the landless Arab,' 'the twice-promised Land'. But there is one which not only remains to this day, but has grown into a reincarnation of the monstrous demon which stalked the world

in the Middle Ages: ANTI-SEMITISM. And the fact is that the seed was sown by the British in Palestine under the Mandate, with a resolution which, had it been more honest and constructive in attitude, would have avoided over eighty years of bloodshed and pain.

Admittedly, they were able to exploit the traditional Muslim-Arab hostility and violence towards Jews as 'Dhimmis' – viz., Jews and Christians living under Muslim rule and subject to discriminatory restrictions. The British, however, added a political dimension to this age-old religious prejudice: and the two together, fertilized with European anti-Semitism, became the poisonous weed that has strangled the Middle East ever since.

In today's Middle East, we hear the old mantra of 'the cycle of violence', echoing the words, ' Arab-Jewish clashes' used to express moral equivalence between perpetrators and victims. When attention is drawn – and rightly so – to the appalling suffering of the Palestinian Arabs, nobody mentions the overwhelming evidence – mostly from Arab leaders – that Arab leaders themselves were entirely responsible for the origin and continuation of their people's suffering. We hear from the Arabs the daily litany of lies so palpable, so obvious, and at times so ridiculous; and we marvel that no one stands up and declares – *'Stop! Enough! If you want our help, change your mindset!'* A third partition of Palestine is proposed by carving out a 'Palestinian' state, occupied by a people, invented - on their own admission - some 40 years ago, and who never cease to proclaim that their aim is still to destroy Israel. Yet a large proportion of these Arabs who deny the right of Jews to return to their homeland immigrated to enjoy a better economic life after the Jews had revitalized the land.

It is recorded that Lawrence of Arabia, said to have known the Arabs better than any (then) living Englishman, declared: *'If you had four hundred decent British policemen in Palestine, there would have been no trouble for the Jews there.'*

I often wonder how many lives would have been saved if this policy had been followed – and if Britain had faithfully carried out her responsibility under the League of Nations' Mandate.

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