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158

Box
56

Folder
579

The Jews and the Arabs in Palestine, 1939.

526

THE JEWS AND ARABS IN PALESTINE
The Collapse of the Conference in London.
What Next?

By
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At
The Temple

On
Sunday morning, March 12, 1939



During the last few weeks, a Round Table Conference was held in the City of London, convoked by Great Britain in an effort to adjust the differences of the Jews and the Arabs in Palestine. Such a Round Table Conference the Jews of Palestine have wanted for many years. For one reason or another it never materialized. The principal reason was the unwillingness of Great Britain to sponsor and to encourage such a formal meeting of Jews and Arabs. At times there was definite resistance on the part of the British Government to such a proposal. The British Government preferred to act as a sort of intermediary between the Jews and the Arabs in Palestine, improving from time to time their relationships one to the other as pressure was applied by one group to another. The old principle of "divisa et impera" was the guiding principle.

As other problems confronted Great Britain in other parts of the world it is clear, and has been clear for some time, that the British Government was determined not to carry out the terms of the Mandate which Palestine received at the hands of the League of Nations. The reason for it was clear in 1920, but it was clearer in 1939 - to carry out to the letter the terms of the Mandate, of the Balfour Declaration is not to the interests of the British Empire. The British Empire does not wish to antagonize the Arab world. Great Britain issued the Balfour Declaration in 1917, under stress of the World War. And it has been publicly acknowledged by the Prime Minister, Lloyd George. Great Britain wanted to court the Jews of the world, to win them away from sympathies, sympathies which were justified to a degree - Russia.

After the World War, they promised to establish a national homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine. Since that time, Jewish good will and Jewish cooperation have no longer been as important to the British Empire as Arab good will and Arab cooperation. This is particularly true because of the

aggressive Italian imperialism. Mussolini has been courting the favor of the Arabs. In the capital city of Lybia, Mussolini has set up an equestrian statue of himself. It is sort of imposing, himself holding up the Sword of Islam, proclaiming to the world that he proposes to champion the Arabs - the role which Englands has been playing for some generations. Great Britain finds it convenient to woo the Arabs even if it means sacrifice largely made by the Jews in Palestine. It has been of interest to the Berlin-Rom Axis to create trouble in the Near East just as it has been of interest to cause trouble both in the British and French possessions, in Tunisia, Corsica and elsewhere. The Rome-Berlin axis has financed, instigated and directed the Arab terrorists in Palestine and Syria as a means of embarrassing Great Britain and France.

The answer to these acts of terrorism which have been going on for some time now in Palestine, on the part of Great Britain, has been the reward of terrorism, to appease them. And since Munich, this policy of appeasement has, as you know, become the dogma of British foreign policy, especially if it can be done at no sacrifice to Great Britain. So that today the British Foreign Office would like to ease up on all pressure on its own imperial lands by sacrificing the Jewish Homeland just as it maneuvered the sacrifice of Sudetenland to Germany. The Foreign Office would like to liquidate the whole thing by sacrificing the Mandate, by repudiating the Balfour Declaration, by setting up an independent state in Palestine, under the protection and of course under the control in the last analysis of Great Britain of Jews in Palestine - a sort of protectorate over minority rights.

This was actually proposed at the London Conference. This was in their minds. But this is not quite as easy to achieve as it seems. There are close to five hundred thousand Jews in Palestine who can, in the last analysis veto any scheme not acceptable to them. These Palestinian Jews

are alert and determined and capable of defending their interests. They have a just cause. They took England at her word. The Jewish Homeland was approved at San Remo by fifty-two nations of the earth. It has received international sanction. It is part of the international law of the world today if there is such a law. Most of these five hundred thousand Jews came to Palestine on the assurance of Great Britain, on the guarantee of the Mandate and the Balfour Declaration. They invested their lives and their fortunes there. They built up the waste land. They gave to Palestine everything that Palestine has today. Nothing was given to them. And they hurt no one. They dispossessed no one. And the Arab population since the coming of the Jews to Palestine following the World War has actually doubled in number. Most of these Jews are not likely to submit to a betrayal. They are not likely to accept the status of a doomed minority in an Arab State as is now practically proposed.

Furthermore, there is the tragic pressure of the diaspora. Hundreds of thousands of Jews are today nomads, seeking new homes, driven to seek new homes. Tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands are turning to Palestine, demanding a right to enter the Jewish Homeland. That pressure the Yishub in Palestine understands and cannot ignore. And these Palestinians will fight to defend their lives.

Great Britain does not ~~xxx~~ relish the idea of shooting down Jews in Palestine who came there at her own invitation and on the basis of her own promises and pledged word. And there is still world public opinion, especially in a country like the United States, which has to be reckoned with. A country like Nazi Germany can afford to ignore public opinion; and Italy. But England which is courting the trust and cooperation of a great country like the United States can hardly ignore a public opinion which deprecates the breaking of a pledge to protect this people which

today finds itself fighting with its back to the wall, this people which has done so well and achieved so mightily in Palestine. And there is public opinion in Great Britain, in Parliament and outside of Parliament and the masses which are opposed to any action out of hand to liquidate the Jewish Homeland, to break Great Britain's pledged word.

The Colonial Office and the Foreign Office understood that feeling. Hence the Round Table Conference, as a way out. Great Britain was to appear at such a Conference in the role of a disinterested, friendly intermediary. The kindly disinterested big brother, Great Britain, would do its best to make peace between two warring factors, and following the breakdown of the negotiations, England would step in and say: I have done my best. It is now for me to impose a policy of my own. And the policy was well known right along, namely, to establish an Arab State and to curtail and restrict Jewish immigration and give the Jews their political protection as a minority group.

In a sense, of course, there was no Round Table Conference, because the Jews and Arabs in London hardly ever met. The Colonial Ministers met first with one group and then with the other group. At times Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Halifax met with them. Once or twice, the Jews and Arabs actually met for about twenty minutes. It was clear at the very beginning that the Jews had nothing to expect except a call for sacrifice and the Arabs everything to expect but a call for sacrifice.

The motive of the Conference was evidenced in the manner in which it was convoked. Invitations were suddenly extended to all the Arab States around Palestine to send delegates to this Conference. What they had to do with the Palestine situation is not clear at all to this moment. When

When England held conferences with the Arabs of Iraq or with the Arabs of Egypt, she did not invite the Jews of Palestine or of the world to sit in. Why these Arab nations should be brought in to help solve a local Palestine problem is not clear. But when one remembers that the real motive was not to adjust the differences between the Jews and Arabs of Palestine but first to consolidate the Arab world under the aegis of Great Britain and secondly to cower the Jewish delegation by a united Arab front, then, as such, it was a very skillful diplomatic move.

You would think that at this time in 1939, with Jewish refugees blocking all the highways of Europe, with seven hundred thousand Jews being forced to leave Germany in the near future, with the prospects of hundreds of thousands more, perhaps millions from Eastern Europe being forced to pick up the wanderer's staff and seek new homes, you would think that Great Britain at this time would convoke a conference to make possible increased immigration in to Palestine, to facilitate settlement of Jews in Palestine, especially since Great Britain has found it impossible to admit within her borders or in her far flung empire more than fifteen thousand Jews. England controls more than one-fourth of the globe. You would think that at least in Palestine which she promised to protect as the Jewish National Homeland, where there is room for one hundred thousand Jews a year, you would think that she would convoke a conference to discover ways and means to make possible mass immigration into Palestine, to ease a bit the horrors and tragedies in the world. Instead of that, she convoked a conference to restrict Jewish immigration into Palestine, to destroy the Jewish Homeland. And such is the way of politics in the year 1939.

What next? Within a few days, within a few weeks, Great Britain will announce her policy in Palestine. The Conference having broken down, she

has announced that she will propose an arrangement. What that arrangement will be, no one knows. The Jews of the world and the Jews of Palestine are ready to accept any arrangement which will safeguard two/^{basic}principles: first, the principle of the Jewish National Home. It has already been established in international world, approved by the conscience of the world. Secondly, the principle that the Jews shall not be a permanent minority in Palestine. Immigration shall not be restricted to insure such a minority status. These two principles have been the heard of the Zionist ideal. They have been at the heart of Jews right through these long centuries. The Jews ~~might~~ want to re-establish themselves as a nation possessed of the political status of a nation of the world. They want some place on earth where they will not be a minority. The curse of our position has been the tragic insecurity of the Jewish position. Everywhere the Jews have been a minority. The Jews in Palestine do not wish to dominate the Arabs, do not wish to reduce them to a minority status. Any arrangement, federation, cantonization, any arrangement that can be worked out by honest statesmanship, directed by good will, will be acceptable to Palestine and the Jews of the world, provided that these two things will be conserved. If not, the Jews will not accept. They will not cooperate. They will wait. They have waited long. Palestine will not be built up in one generation. They will wait for another constellation of world affairs. They will continue to work if they will be permitted. They will continue to build if not interfered with. They will be persistent. They will not sign away the immortal hope of rebuilding a Jewish national life in Palestine. They will not pledge themselves, because they cannot, because they dare not - to permanent minority status.

There is one word which I would like to say in conclusion. Some

people have the impression that Palestine is an Arab country into which Jews have come and where they usurped the places and life of the Arabs, that Palestine is an Arab land. Even Jews have the notion that way back in the year 70 when many Jews were exiled after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem - since that time there were no Jews in Palestine. Palestine belongs to the Arabs and that during the last few years the Zionists have started making a great noise about going back to Palestine.

Nothing, of course, could be further from the truth. Jews have always lived in Palestine. For the last four thousand years, there is hardly a year that Jews did not live in Palestine. When in the year 70, the Temple was destroyed and Jerusalem was laid waste, that did not end the life of the Jewish people in Palestine. Not at all. The Jews continued to live there in vast numbers. Sixty years later, we have an uprising of Jews in Palestine against the power of Rome in which two hundred thousand Jews participated under the leadership of Barcochba. Even after the defeat of Barcochba, the Jews continued to live there. In Galilee there was a thriving and flourishing city for centuries. We have recently unearthed in Galilee quite a number of ruins of synagogues from the second, third and fourth centuries of the Common Era indicating the flourishing life in Palestine. They continued to have their own organization in the country, their own spiritual and political leader termed a Nasi. The office of the Nasi was not abolished in Palestine until the fifth century and for centuries after the destruction of The Temple, the Sanhedrim kept on functioning. Palestine remained the center of Jewish life in the diaspora. It possessed authority of determining the Jewish holidays, and the right to authorize and ordain Rabbis. Jews from all parts of the world sent funds to maintain academies, yeshivoths, as in former times

they sent contributions to the Temple.s The great legal code, the Mishna was compiled in the year 200 and the Talmud in 500, in Palestine. Jews seem to have forgotten these elementary facts of history.

Early in the seventh century, the Jews sent legions of volunteers to aid Persia against the Byzantine Empire. So that for seven hundred years practically after the destruction of The Temple, there was an energetic and creative Jewish life in Palestine. In 636 the Arabs conquered Palestine and Palestine became part of the Arab Empire in the same way as it had been part of Babylon, Egypt, Persia, Greece and Rome. There was no Arab nation in Palestine at that time or since. Palestine had no historical identity as a home of the Arab people until 1917. It was an insignificant province of a vast empire whose capital was in Damascus, Bagdad or in Tyrol, later in Constantinople. Since the time of the seventh century when the Arabs conquered Palestine that country was at one time or another conquered by the crusaders, the Mongolians, the Mameluks of Egypt, the Turks and finally by the English. It was always part of some empire. There was never an Arab nation in Palestine. There were always Jews in Palestine. From the time of the Arabs, until the time that the British conquered it twelve hundred years later, there was never an age, never a year when there were no Jews there.

Of course they had no political independence. Neither did the Arabs have an political rights. From the eighth to the eleventh century in Palestine we have the Geonim who provided all the important yeshivoths or academies in Palestine indicating that there was Jewish life in Palestine. In the ninth century, a great wave of Jews came to Palestine. The Karaites, that interesting sect of Jews which did not accept the teachings of the Rabbis, established important communities in Palestine, created important literature in Palestine. Some one describes numerous Jewish communities in that country. In the

thirteenth century you read of some three hundred Jewish scholars from France and England settling in Palestine. The Mongolian invasion in the thirteenth century destroyed Jewish settlement in Palestine just as the Arab and Christian. Immediately following that invasion, the Jews came back in great numbers, headed by the great leader in exile Nachmonides. In the sixteenth century we find Palestine as the center of a great mystic movement. Safed is a flourishing city. In 1610 Safed had eighteen academies and twenty-one academies. In 1700 we have the great messianic movement of Sabbatai Zevi. In 1701 fifteen hundred men and women from Eastern Europe under the leadership of Chayim Moloch come to Palestine and settled there. In the middle of the eighteenth century you find the Chassidic movement in Palestine and throughout the nineteenth century there are continuous movements into Palestine. Following the proclamation of Zionism we have the steady immigration into the country from all parts of the diaspora. At the time of the World War, in 1914, there were at least 100,000 Jews in Palestine. Today there are close to 500,00 Jews in Palestine. So it is pure fiction to maintain that Palestine has been an Arab land and that Jews are now endeavoring to dispossess the Arabs. It is incorrect to say that Palestine has continued to be as it had been for two thousand years before - a land where Jews were not permitted in large numbers but towards which they continuously strove and in which they continued to live right through the ages in small or larger numbers.

I dwell upon this because a wise man like Bhandi was beguiled into making a statement that Palestine is Arab country. Unfortunately Ghandi is not well-informed.

But Jews and Arabs in Palestine can both live there, can both prosper, can both build up their national life in peace and comfort. Jews and Arabs

are racially akin. They stem from the same stock...

And if a way can be found by an amicable solution to the Palestine problem, it is quite possible that these two races meeting again in the East, may bring about a Renaissance of the entire East, may create a great new civilization for mankind/^{now}that the civilization of the Western World is beginning to break up. The problem is extremely difficult, but with statesmanship and courage and vision and steadfastness, the proper solution will be found that suits both Jews and Arabs. That proper solution has so far not been proposed by Great Britain.

