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Behind the headlines in Palestine, 1945.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES IN PALESTINE

ARCHIVES



By
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver

At
The Temple

On
Sunday morning, November 11, 1945

This is Armistice Day, good friends, commemorating the end of the First World War, twenty-eight years ago. On Armistice day in 1918, the world breathed a deep sigh of relief. The world was uplifted with high hopes for a better world to come. It was a war to end all wars, to make the world safe for democracy. Millions died for that. And in the exaltation of victory, in the mood of high eager anticipation in the first years following the war, the League of Nations was brought into existence, disarmament conferences were planned. The world had been led to expect great and noble things.

The years which elapsed after 1918 saw the world being made not safe for democracy, but for dictatorship, of the right, left, Communism, Fascism Nazism. All the disarmament conferences failed. The League came to be discredited. The disintegration and deterioration in international relations which set in culminated in the tragedy of 1939 and the Second World War. During the Second World War millions of men again perished in order to achieve those objectives which mankind had hoped to achieve in the First World War.

We are just emerging from the Second World War and we are attempting again to do that which was done and done unsuccessfully after the last World War. A new league of nations is being brought into existence, new schemes new devices to establish machinery by which people can adjust their international differences and maintain peace in the world, trying to build on the ruil of the old.

The prospects in the modern world are none too bright. There is still fighting going on in the world, civil war in China, attack on the Javanese -- all wishing to be free of foreign domination. The United Nations are torn by fear and suspicion. Recently the Conference of the Foreign Ministers of the three great powers broke down because of fear and suspicion in the world, the role of the atomic bomb in international affairs.

Armistice Day 1945 reminds us that we are still living in a world between two World Wars in a condition of armistice, not peace. The great problems of mankind have not been solved.

And one of the great problems of mankind not being solved is the problem of Jewish Palestine for which a solution seemed to have been found during the period following the last World War. For our people, the years between the first and second World Wars were years of greatest tragedy, years also which marked the single greatest achievement since

The greatest sinle tragedy consisted of the destruction of nearly two-thirds of European Jewry, a holocaust of six million men, women and children. The holocaust might have been less disastrous had there been no break-down in morality, had the free nations of the world not averted their eyes from the tragedy and sought refuge in the excuse of a domestic affair which didn't concern them. The plight of the Jews in Europe was regarded by the great nations as a rather small problem. They were concerned with much larger and graver problems. And because they refused to face the problem as a great human problem and which has been evaluated as the greatest tragedy in modern history six million innocent people were slaughtered. The practice was widespread of offering these doomed people — and everybody knew that they were doomed — these people were to be pitied, commiserated with. But they did nothing for them. And when a ship load did actually escape which came to our shores that shipload was turned away from one port after another and sent back to Europe, most of them eventually to die in the gas chanbers. Shiploads of Jewish refugees fleeing from the hells of Europe came within sight of the Jewish National Home in Palestine. They were turned away, some of them to break up in the harbor in the sight of the Holy Land. We made a great contribution to solving that human problem by admitting a few hundred refugees

when millions were threatened, and admitted them and putting them in a concentration camp in Oswego where they still are. The bankruptcy of Christian morality, also the bankruptcy of Jewish leadership. We have nothing today but tears....

In spite of all that happened to the Jewish communities in Europe in these years between 1918 and 1939 — the impoverishment of Jewish communities, the rampant anti-Semitism, persecution, the rise of Nazism, the fact that the Jews of the Soviet Union — 3 million of them kept incommunicado, kept away from the rest of Israel during those years — in spite of all the Jewish people succeeded in Palestine in building a great community — 600,000 souls, building colonies, villages in towns and cities, building schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, revived a language and a culture — all this was done in away that evoked the admiration of the world for skill, initiative, sacrificial devotion which were put into the building of this.

This great event in the days to come will be read with the same reverence as we read of the return of the Jews from Babylon.... And in this work of building which has been going on there now reached a moment of crisis. In fact the moment of crisis was reached five years ago, at the beginning of the Second World War. Palestine is on the lips and minds of men today. There has been violence in the Holy Land. There has been rioting in the neighboring countries because of Palestine. Palestine is on the agenda of international discussion today. Prime Minister Attlee is in Washington/discussing with the ~~pres~~ President many great problems. Among these undoubtedly is the subject of Palestine.

Why has there been violence in the Holy Land? The Jews are a peaceful people. The Jews, from their own history of long experience ~~x~~ know that not by might, not by power, but by the spirit are the things of life achieved.

There is violence in Palestine because the Jews there have reached the end of

their patience. They have been driven to desperation. For five years of world war they watched their relatives — their fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters in the countries of Europe done to death, their relatives and their dear ones who could have been saved, had the doors of Palestine been opened to them. They were not opened. The explanation given to them, to these distressed people was that the exigencies of war demanded that the doors be closed to Jewish refugees. Nothing must be done to disturb the international scene in that part of the world. It might anger and arouse the anger of the Arabs. Because of this explanation, hundreds of thousands of Jews perished in Europe who might have been saved.

Nevertheless, the Jews of Palestine practised self-restraint because they were in the war, they fought valiantly in the war. They wanted to help with their whole energies to defeat the Nazis. They practised self-restraint, refusing to allow a condition of violence to break open the shut doors for their dear ones.

Then came the end of the war. They breathed a sigh of relief. The exigencies of war could no longer be used as possible excuse. The doors will surely now be opened to Palestine — not for those who in the meantime had died, but for those doomed, but for the survivors, for the pitiful remnants that were left. Perhaps they could be saved.

Then came and it seemed to be a remarkably fortunate event. The old Tory Government was thrown out of office. A new Labor Party, committed to the abrogation of the White Paper. They were again doomed to disappointment. It was not for the Jews. The new government intended to follow the policy of the old Tory Government.

But the end of the war made possible for the first time an opportunity to take stock of what actually happened to the Jews of the world. Finally the doors of the concentration camps were opened. Neutral countries, neutral

countries could come in and appraise the horrors which many suspected and which many did not know, actually, did exist. In Europe only three to four hundred Jewish thousand/people were left. They were living in wretched conditions, many in concentration camps and wanted to get out. They had enough of the horrors of war. They knew where they wanted to go -- these surviving Jews of Europe. One report after another from neutral observers stated that nearly all of them wanted to go to Palestine.

Dean Harrison stated in his report that 95 percent of the Jews he interviewed wanted to go to Palestine. When President Truman read the report of Dean Harrison recommending that one hundred thousand Jews from the concentration camps alone be immediately enabled to go to Palestine, he said: "One hundred Thousand? Why only one hundred thousand? Why not two hundred thousand?" He immediately wrote to Prime Minister Attlee demanding that these unfortunate people be rescued from the concentration camps, from the American and British zones of occupation, and be immediately permitted to go to Palestine. The President's request was at first rejected.

What were the Jews in Palestine to do in view of these things? They are human beings. The Mandatory Government had undertaken, in the sight of the whole world, to help in the upbuilding of the Jewish National Home and to facilitate immigration into Palestine. Here was the most desperate moment in Jewish history calling for the facilitation of Jewish immigration into Palestine. And here this government stood adamant, brutally and unwarrantedly adamant refusing to permit these war-ravaged human beings a haven in this land.

What amazes me is the little of violence that has taken place in Palestine. No one condones violence. We deplore it. We deplore far more the action of a government which makes such violence on the part of a desperate people inevitable. Dastardly is it for a people determinedly to try to strike off its chains. Dastardly it is that great powers tried to rivet

chains, when men clamor for freedom.

This request for a hundred thousand Jews to go to Palestine immediately in away beclouds the issue, because many people have the impression that the whole problem will be solved with the admission of one hundred thousand Jews to Palestine. If that were the whole problem, it wouldn't be difficult to solve. The one hundred thousand being discussed are those in concentration camps today. But there are a million others, displaced, uprooted people who will not be able to go back to their original lands. There is nothing there for them but death and graveyards. They don't want to go back. Some of the people in concentration camps are from Poland. They would rather die in the camps than go back to Poland because they know what awaits them in Poland, what awaited them after the last war. Three to four hundred thousand Jews in Europe will not find homes in Roumania, Austria, Hungary or Germany. Some of them might wish to go back, but relatively few of them.

And you cannot solve the problem by scattering them over the face of the world. The world will not permit them to be scattered. Most of them don't want them. If you have any doubts about it, go to Washington and raise the question of opening the doors for one hundred thousand Jews to the United States and see what happens. And America is not a hard-hearted, cruel country. Americans are not hard-hearted, cruel people. They simply have enough problems of their own without taking on the burden of this impoverished group. That is true of Canada, New Zealand and other country. There is no question about being room for them the question is that the roomy world doesn't want them.

Even if they could be scattered over the world, it wouldn't solve the Jewish problem. They were scattered in the world before the world -- seven million of them. They lived in France, Belgium, Germany -- everywere -- 7 million of them. What happened to them before the six million of them were

exterminated. What happened in those countries? For decades, for generations there was bitter, mounting anti-Semitism, - what was before the Second World War, before the First World War, one hundred years ago, two hundred years ago, three hundred years ago, what was in the Middle Ages, in Modern times, in backward countries and forward countries. The fact remains that it all stems from a political fact: merely that the Jewish people is a nationally homeless people unlike any other people in the fact of the earth, everywhere a minority dependent on the whim of other peoples, other nations. And as long as this condition persists, so long will these recurrent incidents of persecution persist. It is a fact. You can't escape it. It is not a matter of wishful thinking. Our status in the world is abnormal. Until this is corrected and a nationally homeless people becomes nationally at home somewhere in the world, those conditions will persist. And by taking Jews from one country and putting them in another country and scattering them, we do not solve this fundamental problem. It can not be solved in any other way.

Now the nations of the world recognized this problem and tried to solve it in 1917. This is what Lord Balfour declared: "Great Britain looks with favor on Palestine as a National home for the Jewish people and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object..." And in 1922, 52 nations of the world endorsed this statement and ~~for~~ Great Britain was given the right through legal documentary process to administer to Palestine so as to make it a Jewish national home. A Jewish national home. President Roosevelt, Lloyd George, Lord Balfour clearly defined it. It meant a Jewish Commonwealth. It meant a Jewish state! They said so.

When Great Britain was given the mandate ~~of~~ over Palestine, the Jews set to work with eagerness giving of their substance, manpower of themselves to build Palestine. That genius and impulse which prompted its acceptance was all a mistake. That was antagonizing the Arabs...Great Britain must cater to the

Arabs. Up to 1917 the Arabs did not think of Palestine. The Jews since 1920-22 have made that country highly desirable. They made it the most progressive country in the Middle East. They wanted it for themselves. Now the Balfour Declaration said nothing about Palestine becoming a national home for the Arabs. It does not mention the Arabs at all. Arab rights to national existence was fully recognized after the last war. The Arabs were given the right to build their national home in Syria, Iraq, Saudi-Arabi. They weren't deprived of their national rights. They were permitted to build a national home in territory which is two-thirds the size of Europe which belonged to the Turkish Empire -- one million square miles. Palestine consists of ten thousand square miles. This was singled out for the place where the Jewish people were given the right to build its national home. The Arabs agreed to it, in 1917, for it was an excellent arrangement. Dr. Chaim Weizmann and the other representatives signed a cordial agreement each to help the other to achieve their national rights in that part of the country.

Great Britain, after the Arabs showed their desire for Palestine to be included as an Arab state, began to whittle down the clear intent of the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate. She began to re-interpret words and force meaning into words which these words never intended to convey, and then in an effort to continue to restrict and to make excuses, she began to send investigation commissions, commissions to investigate the conditions in Palestine. One commission brought back a report that the Jews were forcing the Arabs out of Palestine, that there were more and more Jews coming in forcing out the Arabs. Actually the reverse is true. Since 1922, the Arab population has more than doubled. From 600,000 there are 1,200,000 Arabs in Palestine.

Then the investigation commission tried to prove that the coming of the Jews impoverished the Arabs and restricted Arab opportunities. The facts actually are that with the coming of the Jews the standard of the Arabs has

so improved that the Palestine Arab is the most prosperous in the whole Arab world.

Then the commission reported that there is no more land available. You can't bring in any more people. There is no place. The Jews showed how to make land available. They drained the swamps, irrigated the land and reforested it, planted groves in desert lands and flowers. Then came Mr. Lowdermilk who made an investigation and who said that the little country of Palestine can take in another four million people and with industrial development even more room could be made possible for more people.

But the effort was being made and it was obvious that the Colonial Office was determined to keep out, constrict and if possible to liquidate the Jewish National Home in order to please the Arabs. Then came the Second World War. And as the war clouds hung over Europe, British imperialism had to appease the Arabs still further in order to keep them loyal during the war, -- the same appeasement policy which was responsible for Munich.

In 1939, you will recall that infamous White Paper ^{was published} which for all time restricted Jewish immigration into Palestine. Another 75,000 were permitted in over a period of 5 years. Thereafter no more people.

The Jews were allowed to buy land in only 6% of the area. Palestine is the only land in the world where the Nuremburg laws still persist, where the Jews cannot be permitted to buy land. All others can in the Jewish National Home. This to hold loyalty of Arabs to Great Britain. Of course they weren't loyal. Iraq rebelled. ~~against~~....

The Jews during the war, as you know, volunteered in Palestine. By the thousands they fought valiantly on the battlefields around the Mediterranean.

When the war was over the need for appeasing the Arabs no longer existed and the Jews of the world thought this infamous policy of keeping the Jews out of Palestine would be declared illegal. But no! New reasons are now being

given why that policy is in force. Before it was that you mustn't favor the Jews in Palestine because it would drive the Arabs into the hands of Hitler and Mussolini. During the war and would endanger the lives of Americans fighting in the Mediterranean and in North Africa. Since the war, because we might ^{anger} the Arabs and drive them into the arms of the Soviet Union. That is the propaganda which is being currently heard in Washington today and in other countries of the world.

I should like Mr. Attlee to read the following words spoken in 1939 in the House of Commons by Mr. Morrison who is now leader of the House of Commons, therefore the spokesman of Labor in the House of Commons: "We regard this White Paper and the policy in it as a cynical breach of pledges given to the Jews and the world, including America."

"If we do this thing today we shall have done a thing which is dishonorable to our good name, which is discreditable to our capacity to govern and which is dangerous to British security, to peace and to the economic interest of the world in general and of our own country. Moreover, it will not work..."

"I do not know what Government will be in power in ten years, and it would certainly be wrong for me to indicate what such a Government would do in circumstances that we cannot foresee and cannot know, but I think it ought to be known by the House that this breach of faith, which we regret, this breach of British honour, with its policy, with which we have no sympathy, is such that the least that can be said is that the Government must not expect that this is going to be automatically binding upon their successors. They must not expect that. It will go no further than that, but they must understand that this document will not be automatically binding upon their successors in office, whatever the circumstances of the time may be..."

I wish Mr. Attlee in Washington would ^{re}/read the following statement written by Mr. Attlee: "The British Labor Party recalls with pride that in the

the dark days of the Great War they associated themselves with the ideal of a National Home in Palestine for the Jewish people, and that, ever since, the annual conferences of the Party have repeatedly affirmed their enthusiastic support of the effort toward its realization.

"They have never faltered, and will never falter, in their active and sympathetic cooperation with the work of political and economic reconstruction now going forward in Palestine.

"This work is all the more necessary — indeed it has become an imperious duty — when German Jews have to bear the burden of other people's sins and the press of the world reverberates with their unexpected and unmerited sorrow and suffering.

"We are proud of our close association with the organizations of Palestine Labor, who have fulfilled their responsibilities in the rebuilding of Palestine in a manner which has earned world-wide admiration."

And Sir Stafford Cripps, now a member of the British Cabinet and President of the Board of Trade, said: "Account must be taken of the present world situation so far as Jew and Arab are concerned. The Arab is not a persecuted outcast, there are wide dominions in which Arabs can live in safety and happiness — not so the Jews.

"At a time of persecution like the present it would indeed be criminal to snatch from the Jewish race the last hope of having even a tiny territory that they may call their own."

This Sir Stafford Cripps is now one of the most bitter and vehement opponents of Zionism in the British Cabinet.

I would perhaps suggest this last quotation of Mr. Hugh Dalton, Chancellor of the Exchequer for Mr. Attlee to read:

"It is morally wrong and politically indefensible that any Jew wanting to

go to Palestine should be hampered in doing so. On the contrary, Jewish immigration into Palestine should be freely encouraged and assisted.

"The Palestine problem is not the concern of the British Government alone, but should be worked out in close agreement and cooperation among Britain, America and Russia, particularly if this can assure the settlement not only of the Palestine problem, ut of surrounding countries as well. If the settlement is to stand firm and unshakeable, it is indispensable that steps be taken to obtain common support for a policy of establishing a free, happy and prosperous Jewish state in Palestine." To this he has been champion of Jewish Rights.

I close, good friends with these words. I don't know what will come out of the conversations in Washington. Prpbably not all that we hope for, but of this I am certain. There can be no solution of the problem of the near East by sacrificing Jewish rights in Palestine. It will not work. The Jews of Palestine will not permit it. The conscience of the world will not permit.it. Only a just solution will satisfy us... a just solution which will allow the Jews to carry on and build a Jewish National Home.... (statement re assistance to Arabs for better living)

The moment ~~mxm~~ is one of gravity and tension but I believe one not hysteria. We shall wait and see.

1/ Armistice Day - 28 - High hopes - War to End War -

Make Democr. safe : Wilsons dict - Flashes -
League - Disarmament. All came to naught

(a) Years since saw us not Democr - Dictatorships -
Right-Left - Communism - Freedom - Aggression
Low elb.

(b) Disarmament Conf. failed.

(c) League discredited.

(d) Disintegration + deterioration - 1939 II W. War

(e) Wilsons were perished - Just emergency -

(f) Do all over again what we tried to do -
after last war ^(UNO) Prospects not too bright -

Warring ^{China - Java} - Fear - Brut - Armed Truce.

(f) Yes, indeed, last 28 yrs. - armistice! and
armistice still - not peace.

2/ For J. people - Greatest tragedy - Gr. achievement

(a) 6 M dead. Holocaust used not have - Brutal -
Chr. morality - ships - Prison - Insuperb
Jewish leadership - Tears

(b) But for achievement - Pride - hostility

3/ Crisis - Violence in Holy Land - Unresolved problem - Deplorable.

~~Re~~ Reached end of their patience.

- Many of them - from lands of H. Europe -
- Tried to rescue them - father - mother - Polish
- Ship loads within sight - surrounded us - Threatened
- Experiences, War. - 22/23 -
- War over - Save remnant! No!
- New Gen'l - pledged - surely - No!
- Intend to keep doors closed -

4) The survivors - plight - wants to go to Pal.
Red Cross! Dean Harrison -

- Wretched conditions - reviled Antisemit.
- Must have - not 100,000 but over a million.
- No other place - try to raise question in Congress
- Scatter them - cannot Even if you could
- You have merely created a new diaspora
- How you solved - fund. problem - wisecracks
- he. its abnormal status - Nat. Honorables
- Jews were scattered - threat Europe - 70% then
- in every land - certainly not backward lands
- See what happened to them - And before their
- extermination - what vicious Antisem. for
- generations!.....

- 5/ Nations recognized it - 1917 - 1922 - 6
Jews set to work - Poured in -
Mr. imperialism discovered - Jewish impulse - a mistake
She must cater to Arabs - ~~they don't want it~~
Jews ~~that made~~ ^{made} Pal. - a desirable place!
No mention any when I am Arab nat. homeland
in Pal. Elsewhere - 1,200,000 \$ Pal. for J. Nat. ^{Hanukkah}
= Whittle down - excuses - ^{Demographic Census 1951}
(a) Driving out (b) Expulsion (c) to leave Pal.
= War clouds - affront Arabs - ^{Arabs}
White Paper 1939. 75,000 - ^{by Arab Council}
6/ Arabs were not won over - ^{Arab} - ^{Mufti} Egypt - X
Jews - voluntarily - J. Burghade -
7/ Still Imperial policy prevails -
Before war - regime : Drury - Suez - Russia
Oil - American oil interests - Airport -
8/ British inspired Arab League - ^{no right to speak} drift Jewish - ✓
Egypt - populace - hardships - evil hands
Turkols. - threats - Violence..
9/ Attlee - (Drury)
another commission -