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Jewish problem and Palestine
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JEWISH PROBLEM

AND

PALESTINE AS ITS SOLUTION

By Dr. MICHAEL TRAUB

Published by the Zionist Council for New Zealand

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Yours

The Author.

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THE JEWISH PROBLEM

AND PALESTINE AS ITS SOLUTION

1. THE JEWISH PROBLEM:

(a.) The history of the Jewish problem and of anti-Semitism is as old as the history of the Jewish people outside of Palestine. It started long before the destruction of the second Temple and constantly overshadowed Jewish life in the Dispersion. Haman was not a legendary figure of a mythological past but the prototype of Jew-hatred throughout the ages, and the words he addressed to Ahasuerus, King of Persia: "There is a certain people *scattered abroad, and dispersed* among the people in all the provinces of thy Kingdom," contain the underlying reason for the Jewish problem and anti-Semitism for over 2,000 years.

The accusation of the anti-Semites varied through the ages, not according to the various qualities of the Jewish population in different countries at various stages of our history, but according to the reaction of the non-Jewish population to certain arguments.

Manifold as these accusations may have been, the fundamental reason for all of them was the permanent minority status of Jews as a nation in every country in the world. Minority status signifies weakness, and any permanent minority is a constant temptation for the majority to abuse its power and to take advantage of the weakness of its neighbour. Just treatment of a permanent minority clinging to its national identity and holding fast to the religion of its ancestors implies permanent justice on the part of the majority. The history of the past 2,000 years has taught the Jewish people that to expect such permanent justice from those in power is a dangerous illusion—a mere dream.

(b.) For over 1,800 years Jews have carried their minority status and consequently the Jewish problem with

them. But neither persecution nor dispersion and minority status have destroyed their national entity. In spite of all temptations of religious assimilation and the indescribable persecutions of the Middle Ages, the Jewish people has survived. This survival is one of the great miracles of human history for the last two millenniums. The reasons are manifold: common history and common experience, peculiarity of social structure and community of social interests, physical and spiritual seclusion from the outside world, and, above all, a common religion and an indestructible belief that the persecutions and tribulations are only temporary, and that the return to Zion will in God's good time be fulfilled—a fulfilment that will abolish the Golah and the minority status; a Messianic salvation that may come to them any year, any day.

Three times a day the Jews have prayed: "Let our eyes behold when thou returnest unto Zion in mercy," and every generation figured out the end of the days and firmly believed that they themselves would participate in the salvation.

(c.) Eighty generations have clung to this faith. The dawning of the new era of human history in 1791 marked the beginning of the illusion of permanent justice. The "Magna Charta" of the French Revolution gave full civil rights to every Jew, and although it abolished at the same time the autonomy of Jewish congregations, some Jews were willing to exchange their national survival anchored in their Messianic faith, against their individual survival guaranteed by the Declaration of the Rights of Man.

For a short while it seemed that the new Messiah of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity would bring about the salvation of Jews even in countries where the dawn of the new era had not yet broken, and hope soared high in Jewish mass settlements in Eastern Europe.

They were sadly mistaken. In Eastern Europe the situation changed in the last quarter of the nineteenth century from bad to worse. New restrictions and persecutions made life unbearable in Russia and in Roumania, while in Western

Europe notwithstanding the spiritual Land of Promise implied in the Great Napoleonic Revolution, anti-Semitism was riding once again on the crest of the wave.

Max Nordau, in 1898, 35 years before Hitler's rise to power, made the following statement:

"France, the France of the Great Revolution and of the Declaration of Human Rights, the country that first gave Europe the example of the legal emancipation of the Jews, France is to-day marching at the head of the anti-Semitic movement. . . . Such is the state of affairs. In the lands of the East, Jews are hated and persecuted, without any extenuation being offered; in the countries of the West which stand at the head of civilisation, the Jews are persecuted on hypocritical grounds."

2. ZIONISM AS A SOLUTION:

Zionism, rooted in the unshakeable faith of the eventual return of the Jewish people to Palestine, was called upon to give the answer and to solve the age-old problem of Jewish homelessness. It embodied not only the desire to escape minority life and persecutions in the Golah, but also the creed that only in Palestine would the Jewish people be able to normalize its cultural, political, and social structure as a nation.

In spite of the lack of clarity of the Basle Programme¹ and the ambiguity of "a Home in Palestine secured by Public Law," the goal of Dr. Theodor Herzl, the founder of the Zionist Organisation, was from the very outset a Jewish State as the only way to a modern solution of the Jewish problem.

Twenty years later the same goal was visualised by the statesmen who framed the Balfour Declaration² in 1917. Lloyd George, President Wilson, General Smuts, Lord Robert

1. "The aim of Zionism is to create for the Jewish people a Home in Palestine secured by public law."

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

Cecil, and others contemplated the eventual establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine, and it was Churchill who said in 1922:

“If, as it may well be, there should be created in our lifetime by the borders of the Jordan a Jewish State, under the protection of the British Crown, which might comprise three or four million of Jews, an event will have occurred in the history of the world which from every point of view will be beneficial and would be especially in harmony with the truest interests of the British Empire.”

Although their claims to Palestine were deeply rooted in the past, the Balfour Declaration became the modern Magna Charta of the Jewish people. It arose out of a genuine desire to right the wrongs of two thousand years, and could thrive only in the moral atmosphere of international justice proclaimed by the Allied Nations at the end of the last war. However, the great act of British statesmanship of 1917 already suffered its first setback in 1922, when the Mandate for Palestine was confirmed by the Council of the League of Nations. Contrary to the original intentions of the authors of the Balfour Declaration, two-thirds of Palestine was cut off from the area of the Jewish National Home, and formed into a separate mandated territory. No less painful was the introduction of the ambiguous idea of “absorptive capacity” of Palestine by the White Paper of 1922, which limited, from the very beginning, free Jewish immigration into Palestine.

The idea of the Balfour Declaration and of the Mandate over Palestine was an integral part of the League of Nations system. In the opinion of Field-Marshal Smuts, the establishment of the Jewish National Home and of the League of Nations were the two greatest political achievements of the last war. But shortly after their proclamation, the world (to quote Lloyd George) “entered upon a hard and difficult road,” and the great experiment of the Jewish National Home had to be carried out under most unfavourable conditions. The political atmosphere, particularly of the second decade between the two World Wars, became more and more hostile to the ideas of Wilson, Lloyd George, Churchill, and others,

and the Balfour Declaration was gradually curtailed in its interpretation and eventually regarded as an embarrassing inheritance of an idealistic past.

The setbacks in the development of the Jewish National Home and the failure of the League of Nations were both due to the decay of the political conscience of the world and to the lack of moral courage shown by those who were responsible for the policy of the Democracies of the world during the past twenty years. It started with Manchuria and was followed by the Democracies failing to oppose Jewish persecution in Germany in 1933. The appeasement policy in Palestine and in other countries was thus only a link in the chain of concessions to terror and violence, and it was under the shadow of Munich that the White Paper was published on the 17th of May, 1939.

In view of the development of the past few years, it may be added that most of the members of the present Government condemned the White Paper as a breach of the pledge given to the Jewish people, and it was Mr. Winston Churchill who said in his famous speech of 23rd May, 1939:

“I feel bound to vote against the proposals of His Majesty’s Government. As one intimately and responsibly concerned in the earlier stages of our Palestine policy, I could not stand by and see solemn engagements into which Britain has entered before the world set aside for reasons of administrative convenience or—and it will be a vain hope—for the sake of a quiet life.”

But the stigmatization of the Chamberlain policy by Churchill, Amery, Morrison, and others was overridden by those who wanted to appease Hitler and Mussolini and to buy peace at any price. Despite the rapid deterioration of the Jewish position throughout the world and the complete failure of the Refugee Conference of Evian, the White Paper came into effect and Jewish immigration to Palestine was limited to 75,000 during the following five years. Many thousands of Jews who became, after May, 1939, victims of Nazi horrors would certainly have been saved if the Munich

policy of the Chamberlain Government had not overshadowed the spirit of the Balfour Declaration and the noble intentions of the great statesmen who framed it.

3. PALESTINE AT WAR:

Although deeply resenting the injustice of the White Paper, the Jewish population of Palestine has stood the test as a belligerent nation in this war. Since the outbreak of the war they have been fighting for the right to accept the challenge of Hitler as a nation, and to form a separate Jewish Fighting Force under British High Command. Despite the fact that the offers made by the Jews were only partially and grudgingly accepted, all the assistance they have been able to give to defeat the enemy of the Jewish people and of mankind, they have given wholeheartedly. Nearly 30,000 Palestinian Jews, men and women, are serving in the British Army, Navy, Air Force, Women's Auxiliary Service, and local defence formations, and recruiting is still in progress. Jewish men have distinguished themselves on many occasions and have earned high praise for their fighting qualities and courage, and Jewish women soldiers contribute to the war effort in the same self-sacrificing manner as do their British sisters.

The Jewish war effort in Palestine is, however, confined not only to actual fighting. During the four years of war Jews have proved that they possess not only the will to participate fully in the war effort, but also the technical skill, the scientific knowledge, and the economic resources necessary to carry on the war in the Near East. Some 15,000 Jewish factory workers are engaged on Army orders, another 15,000 are employed in military camps and workshops, while 5,000 are engaged in transport work for the Army, making a total of 65,000 Jews serving direct Army needs, quite apart from 60,000 Jewish men and women engaged in other industrial, agricultural, and transport work.

The corresponding figures for the war effort of the Arab population of Palestine are negligible, and only 3,000 Palestinian Arabs have so far joined the Armed Forces. While the Arabs, in whose favour the White Paper was published, prefer

in Palestine, as well as in neighbouring countries, to remain neutral, the Jews have proved to be the only nation in the Near East which has done its utmost to play its full part in this war.

Nonetheless, the policy of appeasement in Palestine continues during the war: It was in pursuance of this policy that the Land Ordinance was published in 1940, and it has been for the same reason that the right to form a Jewish fighting force has not been granted. At a time when Hitler is waging his war of extermination against the Jewish people, Jews in their own National Home have been denied the right to fight as Jews for their people and their Homeland.

4. THE MARTYRDOM OF A NATION:

The Jewish attitude towards the refusal of a Jewish fighting force, and particularly towards the immigration policy of the White Paper, can be understood only in the light of the terrible events in Europe during the past four years. The Nazi persecutions of the Jewish people in Central Europe on the eve of the war, were only a prelude to the bestial policy of brutal annihilation of entire Jewish populations in Nazi-occupied countries since September, 1939. The full weight of the inhuman ferocity of a barbarous enemy fell upon the Jewish people, and over two and a half million have been slaughtered whilst another four or five million are faced with extermination during the coming months. The world stands aghast at this outbreak of mediaeval savagery, and more than ever before is the Jewish National Home called upon to offer refuge and asylum to Jews who may be able to escape the European Inferno during the war, and to prepare the ground for the post-war absorption of those Jews who may survive the martyrdom of their people in Nazi Europe.

5. "LET MY PEOPLE GO"—AND BERMUDA:

The unequivocal demand of Jewry in this crucial hour of their Nation's agony is that the Jewish National Home be allowed to play its full part in rescuing Jews from the valley of slaughter.

On the 17th December, 1942, Mr. Eden, speaking in the House of Commons, condemned in the name of the United Nations, in the strongest possible terms, the cold-blooded extermination of the Jewish people in Europe, and gave expression to the feeling of horror and indignation which was manifesting itself in all parts of the civilised world. For the spontaneous gesture of sympathy with suffering European Jewry by the members of the British House of Commons, who endorsed Mr. Eden's speech, world Jewry will ever be deeply grateful. It was the British Parliament "in its finest hour." But sympathy alone is not enough and will not save one human life unless it is accompanied by practical measures. Declarations of solidarity, however forceful they may be, can be judged only by deeds, and we are asking, therefore: "What has been done since December the 17th, 1942, to save Jews from Nazi Europe?"

The rescue of European Jewry should comprise three measures:

- (a.) The enabling of refugees to emigrate from Nazi Europe;
- (b.) The obtaining of permission to pass through neutral countries, and in some cases to find in them a temporary asylum;
- (c.) The securing of the right for refugees to immigrate to countries which are willing and able to absorb them.

(a.) With regard to emigration, Nazi Europe can be divided into two parts: countries under direct Nazi rule—which cover the greater part of Nazi Europe, and the three German satellites—Hungary, Roumania, and Bulgaria.

In the first group of countries—Germany, Poland, Czecho-Slovakia, France, Belgium, Holland, etc., the emigration of Jews is prohibited by Nazi law. Jews are allowed to leave these countries only if they are sent away to slave labour or exiled by Nazi hangmen to be murdered.

"Let My People Go" must be addressed in these areas to the Nazi authorities, who should be approached by the United

Nations through the mediation of neutral States, and asked either to commute annihilation to expulsion or to exchange German nationals in free countries against Jews in Nazi-occupied territories. There are hundreds of thousands of German subjects in the United States and other territories under the rule of the United Nations, and at least their women and children could be exchanged for Jewish women and children in Nazi Europe. The Governments of the United Nations have been asked to take the necessary steps in this direction, but it seems that so far no action has been taken.

The apathy of the United Nations towards rescuing Jewish victims from Europe is even more evident in Hungary, Roumania, and Bulgaria. 1,000,000 Jews are living in these three States where the Jewish situation is comparatively less desperate than in other countries under Nazi rule. In Hungary, despite all persecutions, Jews are not yet being slaughtered; in Roumania, the mass murder was temporarily stopped after the pogroms at Jassy and the banishment of the Jews of Bukovina and Bessarabia to Transdnestria, whilst in Bulgaria Jews have so far been only economically and socially persecuted. However, the situation there can change from day to day as the Nazi masters are constantly pressing for greater allegiance to their policy of mass extermination of the Jewish population, and the possibility of an Allied invasion may precipitate the complete Nazi occupation of these countries. The confidence of these satellite States in an Axis victory is shaken, and they would be ready to let thousands of Jews go provided that the United Nations, and particularly Great Britain and the United States, would intervene and demand the release of a substantial number of Jews. Here, again, no action has been taken to remove Jews from the Nazi danger area.

As to the rescue of European Jews, let us also not forget that 400,000 Jewish refugees from Poland who escaped to Russia are now living on the borders of Turkestan and Persia under the most terrible conditions. According to official estimates, one-third of them have already died of starvation, cold, and disease. The Russian Government has declared these Jews who escaped from Poland to be Soviet citizens, and all

requests to allow at least those amongst them who could not be used for the Russian war effort, either in the forces or on the Russian home front, to go to Palestine, remained unheeded.

(b.) The same picture of passivity and lack of intervention presents itself in the neutral countries through which refugees have to pass. Our request addressed to the United Nations to support our negotiations with the neutral Governments has not been heeded, whilst Mr. Eden stated that the British Government has not yet found any reason for, or possibility of, intervening in the matter, and that the decision would be left to the discretion of the neutral countries themselves. The burden of the negotiations, therefore, has fallen on our own shoulders, and the results we have so far achieved are poor and insignificant.

The Spanish Government does not allow the passage of refugees through its territory, and those few who have succeeded in escaping from France to Spain did so without permission. In Switzerland there are 13,000 refugees, of whom many stole across the border at the peril of their lives.

Turkey allows only the transit of small groups (usually of 50) at a time, and only when one group has crossed the Syrian-Turkish border, en route for Palestine, is another small group permitted to enter Turkey.

It is obvious that the picture would be entirely different if the United Nations, which voiced their sympathy and indignation in December, 1942, would have given their support by approaching the neutral Governments and asking them to grant transit to Jewish refugees escaping the Hell of Europe, and, if necessary, to grant them temporary asylum.

(c.) In reply to a question in the House of Commons, Mr. Eden stated that it would be the desire of the United Nations to do everything they could to provide an asylum for any who could escape. While the demand of "Let My People Go" remained unheeded, we hoped that at least the passionate appeal of "Let My People Come" would find a more sympathetic response. Unfortunately, nothing has been done in this direction either.

The Bermuda Conference, from which the Jewish people expected practical proposals and the fulfilment of the hopes aroused by the statement of the United Nations in December, 1942, ended, apparently—like the Evian Conference of 1938—in failure. The only suggestion which has so far been made is for the removal of 80,000 refugees from neutral countries to French North Africa, Cyrenaica, Libya, and Abyssinia, whilst Jewish Palestine, which is able and ready to settle and absorb hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees from Europe, was not even mentioned as a country of refuge.

Despite the undeniable fact that thousands of Jews from Bulgaria, Hungary, and Roumania, as well as from other areas, could easily be brought to Palestine, where they would reinforce the Allied war effort, the Jewish National Home is unfortunately still governed by the spirit and regulations of the White Paper of 1939 which limits the extent of Jewish immigration to 75,000 during five years and *foresees its complete cessation after the 31st March, 1944*. Only 29,000 Jews—mostly children—who represent the balance of the total figure stipulated by the White Paper, can enter Palestine before the 31st March, 1944: thousands of others are being condemned to certain death.

It is with deep sorrow and indignation that we witness the implementation of a document which, in 1939, was condemned by Mr. Churchill and other prominent British statesmen as a breach of a pledge made to the Jewish people, and the frustration of the spirit of the declaration of December, 1942, which denounced the cold-blooded annihilation of the Jewish people in Europe.

In the name of those who are silenced behind the prison walls of the Nazi realm, we appeal to the conscience of the civilised world and ask Great Britain to open the doors of the Jewish National Home in order to enable Palestinian Jewry to receive those Jewish refugees who can be rescued from the clutches of the Nazi persecutors. Not only are the lives of thousands of tortured Jews in Europe at stake, but the very principles for which we are fighting.

6. LET MY PEOPLE COME:

In this, the darkest hour of its history, the thoughts of the Jewish people are turned to the future of its National Home and the remnants of the Nation in the post-war world. How will European Jews emerge from the holocaust of this war?

We do not know how many will survive the horrors of inhuman persecutions, but we do know that those who will still be alive when the day of victory comes, will be economically ruined and physically broken. Most of them will have witnessed the ghastly murder of their nearest and dearest, and will have been brutally expelled to other areas of the invaded European Continent. Their homes destroyed and their ties with the outside world forcibly severed, they will have cherished for all these terrible years of war one burning desire: to leave the ruins of their former life behind them and to start, under normal human conditions, their life anew.

We hope that with the victory of the United Nations, equality of human rights will be proclaimed in countries formerly ruled by National Socialism and Fascism, and that Jews too will enjoy human freedom in a free democratic world. But equal rights will not solve the problem of Jewish Homelessness; even the temporary reintegration of the uprooted and floating Jewish population of Europe into the surrounding non-Jewish world will be, in many cases, an insuperable task.

What sanctuary will there be for the displaced millions of Jews whose economic and social reabsorption prove impossible? Some of them may find haven and refuge in the great democracies of the New World, but the underlying reasons of the Jewish problem will not thus be eliminated. Neither can we expect a large-scale immigration policy from countries which will have to reabsorb millions of demobilised soldiers into the economic structure of the post-war world. For the homeless mass of millions of European Jews, only Palestine will be able to offer an asylum and a home.

The primary objective is, therefore, the absorption of two or three million Jews into their National Homeland after

the war. All Zionist energies must be concentrated on the realisation of this supreme goal, and the steps to prepare the ground politically as well as economically for a planned Jewish mass immigration to Palestine must be taken immediately. Nobody knows how many months or years will elapse before the Peace Conference or whether peace may not come in stages—whilst the final decisions concerning various post-war problems may be made gradually.

The aim is fixed and the goal is clear. In accordance with the statement of policy adopted by the Zionist Council in Jerusalem and the Biltmore Zionist Conference of 1942, the Jewish people demands that the Jewish Agency be vested with the control of Jewish immigration into Palestine and with the necessary authority for the upbuilding of the country, and that Palestine be established as a Jewish Commonwealth within the structure of the British Commonwealth of Nations. Only by obtaining self-governing conditions in Palestine will the Jewish people be able to develop the absorptive capacity of the country to its fullest extent and to settle in the Jewish National Home a large part of the uprooted Jewish population of Europe. Any political solution which will not ensure this fundamental objective of the Zionist policy, or which will impede unrestricted Jewish immigration to Palestine after the war, will defeat from the very beginning the primary object of the National Home and perpetuate the homelessness of the Jewish people.

Is Palestine large enough to become a home for these millions of Jews? This question has been asked again and again. At the end of the last war the world doubted whether such a small country would be able to increase very considerably its population, which consisted at that time of 650,000 Arabs and 55,000 Jews. Since 1918 the population has more than doubled, and the conditions of life have improved for Arabs as well as for Jews. But Palestine is still a half-empty country with undeveloped agricultural and industrial resources, and the last twenty-five years of colonization has taught us that its absorptive capacity, as well as that of any other country, is not a static but a dynamic quantity. In addition

to its present population of one and a half million Jews and Arabs, another three or four million Jews could be settled, provided they were granted the right to apply their skill, their will-power, and their pioneering abilities in colonizing the country on a sound and modern basis. Palestine needs creative enterprise and human devotion, both of which can be given by Jews returning to their ancient homeland; they are able to revive its dormant energies and to restore it as an important centre of progress and culture in the Near East. The establishment of this centre would not only solve the problem of Jewish homelessness but would also be a vital constructive factor in the cultural and economical revival of the Arab population whose rights would be based on democratic principles of justice and freedom, and whose welfare and spiritual development would be organically tied up with the welfare and progress of all inhabitants of the Jewish Commonwealth.

The plight of millions of Jews, unprecedented in its tragedy and grimness, calls not only for temporary help but for a constructive, long-range policy. In presenting its aims to the outside world the Jewish people demands that the problem of its homelessness be settled once and for all. The permanent solution of the Jewish problem must become part and parcel of the economic and political reconstruction of the world, and the implementation of this task the immediate concern of the United Nations.

The realisation of this policy depends on the assistance of Great Britain as the trustee of the Jewish National Home and on the moral support of the democratic world. The tide of the war has turned, and more than ever before can British statesmen now afford to look at fundamentals and to be guided in their policy by those basic principles of international justice which were pushed aside and ignored in the appeasement years preceding this war. From the materialization of these principles, the Jewish people expect the abolition of the White Paper of 1939, the provisions of which are alien to the spirit of the great act of British statesmanship of 1917. The restoration of that spirit will put an end to the reign of

“Munich”-policy in Palestine, and will pave the way to a just and lasting solution of the Jewish problem. It will also enable a speedy and progressive development of the Arab countries adjacent to the Jewish National Home. The living relationship between the Jewish people and their Homeland turned Palestine into an important cultural and economic outpost of the Near East. The progress and continuance of the peaceful development of this area depend on the rapid increase of the Jewish population of Palestine, and is in full accord “with the truest interests of Great Britain” and of the United Nations. The constructive role which Palestinian Jewry is destined to play by forging the links of culture and mutual understanding at this juncture of three continents gives additional weight to the rightful claim of the Jewish people to their ancient Homeland.

No less important than this proclamation of Jewish rights to the outside world is the rallying of the vital forces within the Jewish Nation, the determination to fulfil the Zionist duty towards the people and the Homeland, regardless of difficulties and undeterred by the adverse political events of the day. The non-Jewish world must realise not only the bestiality of the persecutions of the Jews in Nazi Europe but also the iron will and the creative spirit of a strong Zionist movement which embraces all constructive elements within the Jewish people. The time, therefore, calls for unity of Zionist purpose and of Zionist action, for uninterrupted Zionist work, for bold vision, and courageous decisions. A grave and unique responsibility rests on Zionist organisations in the Anglo-Saxon world. Let them rise to the realisation of their Zionist duty, let them be worthy of those millions who are voiceless, and be guided by the spirit of a Nation which is resolved to live and not to die.

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