

ZIONISM

—the obstacle to Peace

For fifty years the Middle East has been plagued by wars and civil strife, by bloodshed and the embittered misery of refugees.

The cause of all the enmity between Jew and Arab in the Middle East is Zionism, and so it has been throughout their quarrel in and over Palestine. Until Zionism was planted in the Middle East half a century ago, Jews and Arabs had lived together in harmony and peace. The pogroms and persecution which the Jews of the Diaspora suffered in Europe and Russia had no counterpart in the Arab World. Yet it is the Arabs who have had to pay for the sins of the West.

At first Zionism presented itself as a simple, humane ideal: the Jewish people dispersed through the world should be enabled to resume their ancient ties with the land of their forefathers and to establish there a national home which would be a focus of religion and culture for Jews wherever they might live. In this idealistic guise Zionism found ready support not only among Jews but also among Christians nurtured in the history of the Old Testament. It might even have found acceptance among Arabs, had the Zionists genuinely desired no more than a national home in Palestine.

But in fact leaders of the Zionist Movement intended from the outset to colonise and take over Palestine and to establish there a Jewish State "as Jewish as England is English". To this end they propagated the myth that Palestine was an empty land crying out for settlers. The existence of a settled Arab population in the land was ignored and concealed. Their rights were to be brushed aside.

The Zionist aim was ruthlessly pursued by propaganda, colonisation and force of arms. The sordid tale of the usurpation of Palestine and the dispossession of its Arab people is briefly recounted in this pamphlet and illustrated in the appended maps.

In the course of these fifty years Zionism has shed the humane idealism which inspired its conception and has

emerged as an aggressive, racist ideology dedicated to the usurpation of another people's homeland and to the establishment on it of an exclusive Jewish State with pretensions to command the loyalty and support of all Jews throughout the world. It is served by a formidable military machine commanded by arrogant men who do not seem to care what company they keep in the annals of man's inhumanity to man.

It is time the world called a halt to Zionist aggression and recognised Zionism for what it now is — an ugly and dangerous anachronism which blocks the way to peace in the Middle East and which dooms the peoples living there—both Jews and Arabs—to continuing, inevitable conflict and suffering.

Before 1917.

For thirteen centuries before the First World War, Palestine had been part of the Arab World and continuously occupied by its indigenous people. Indeed their roots in the land reached back to the dawn of history, before the coming of Jews, Christians or Moslems.

In 1914 it was a prosperous and well-populated part of the Arab lands within the Ottoman Empire. The claim of Zionism that Palestine was a "land without a people" which could thus conveniently be given to "a people without a land" was always false.

In 1914 there were 600,000 Arabs and 80,000 Jews living in Palestine. During the War, in return for the Arab revolt against the Turks, Britain promised independence to most of the Arab lands under Ottoman rule, including Palestine. But soon afterwards Britain made deals with France and with the Zionist Movement which conflicted with the pledge given to the Arabs.

1917—the Balfour Declaration.

At the time when it promised "the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people", Britain had no legal authority to decide the future of Palestine and its people. The Balfour Declaration contained a proviso that nothing would be done to prejudice the rights of the Palestinian Arabs. But neither the Zionists nor Balfour himself took this seriously. The British Government stated publicly that the future must be decided by "the wishes of the inhabitants", but privately Balfour told his Cabinet colleagues: "In Palestine we do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country". As for the Zionists, from the beginning their purpose was to colonise and take over Palestine—regardless of opposition from its Arab inhabitants who were then the overwhelming majority of the population.

1922-1948—the Mandate Period.

The Balfour Declaration was incorporated in the Mandate given to Britain in 1922 and the British Administration in Palestine was committed to facilitating "Jewish immigration under suitable conditions" and to encouraging "close settlement by Jews on the land". So began

the Zionist conquest of Arab Palestine by immigration and colonisation.

Seeing the threat to their homes and land, the Arabs protested and, when their protests failed, rebelled and were put down. The British, caught in the conflict of irreconcilables with which they had saddled themselves, took refuge in indecision—sometimes veering towards limiting Jewish immigration and preserving an Arab majority in Palestine, at others yielding to Zionist pressure for increased Jewish immigration leading in time to the establishment of a separate Jewish state.

The hideous Nazi persecution of the European Jews gave fresh impetus to Zionist claims. A flood of illegal Jewish immigrants swept into Palestine. The British tried to stem the flood, but proved incapable of withstanding the pressure of international opinion, particularly from the United States, and of savage Jewish terrorism in Palestine. In February 1947 they threw in their hand and turned the problem over to the newly established United Nations.

By then the Jewish population of Palestine had grown from 80,000 (at the beginning of the Mandate) to over 600,000. But the Arabs were still in a majority of two to one and still owned over 90 per cent of the land.

1947—Partition.

In May 1947 the General Assembly set up a special committee to investigate the Palestine problem. A majority of the committee recommended partition, and in October this was forced through the Assembly by the United States and other member states acting in the Zionist interest. The Arabs challenged the right of the U.N. to partition Palestine in defiance of the wishes of the Palestinian Arab majority and warned that they might be compelled to resort to their "legitimate right of self-defence".

Besides denying the right of self-determination to the Palestinian Arabs, the partition plan was grossly unfair in its apportionment of the land. It gave the Jews, who were then only one third of the population and possessed less than one tenth of the land, nearly 60 per cent of the total area. It assigned most of the fertile areas to the Jews, leaving the Arab majority with the less productive remainder. It proposed a "Jewish" state in which half the population would be Arab.

Understandably, the Arabs rejected the plan and prepared to resist it, by force if necessary.

1947-48—the First Zionist War.

As the Mandate drew to its chaotic close but while the British were still nominally in control, civil war broke out between the two communities in Palestine. The better armed and better organised Jewish underground forces got the upper hand over the Palestinian Arab guerillas and ruthlessly pursued a deliberate plan to drive as many as possible of the Arab inhabitants out of their towns and villages, especially in strategically important areas. Before the British withdrawal in May 1948 some 300,000 Arabs had thus already been uprooted from their homes

and become refugees. By the time that the regular Arab armies intervened in the struggle in the wake of the British withdrawal, the dispossession of the Palestinian Arabs was already far advanced.

The Arab forces scored some initial successes, but later the tide turned against them. When the fighting ceased, Israel had gained the upper hand on most fronts and was in occupation of an area one third larger than that allotted to the Jewish state under the U.N. plan. The additional territory seized from the Arabs included the Arab cities of Jaffa, Acre, Ramleh, Lydda, and Beersheba. Israel still holds this territory by force of arms.

During the fighting still more Arab civilians had been driven from their homes in Palestine. In the end the total of the dispossessed refugees rose to about three quarters of a million.

1948-1967—neither Peace nor War.

At the end of the war the U.N. General Assembly unanimously resolved that the refugees should be given the opportunity of returning to their homes or, if they chose not to return, of receiving compensation and being resettled elsewhere. In May 1949 Israel undertook to implement this and other U.N. resolutions as a condition of her admission to U.N. membership. But afterwards Israel refused—and for over twenty years has continued to refuse—to allow the refugees to return.

Throughout this time the refugees have been living in exile, most of them in poverty and subsisting on international charity. Meanwhile Israel has seized and used their homes and property to settle new Jewish immigrants, but has paid nothing in recompense to the dispossessed Arab owners.

Less than ten years passed before Israel launched the Second Zionist War, claiming to have been provoked into taking defensive action by fedayeen raids from Gaza and Egypt. In October 1956, after making a secret agreement with Britain and France, Israel attacked Egypt and occupied Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula. But on this occasion, after the Suez adventure had collapsed, she was compelled by American pressure to withdraw to the 1948 boundaries.

The next decade saw Israel's Arab neighbours gradually recovering from the ravages of war, while maintaining their political and economic boycott of Israel. The economic advance of Jordan in particular was striking. Even the Palestinian refugees were slowly getting back on to their feet again.

Meanwhile in Israel cracks were beginning to appear in the edifice of the Zionist state. Unemployment was intolerably high, financial support from abroad was falling off, and more Jews were leaving Israel than were coming in. It began to look as though in time the balance of power—military as well as economic—might shift decisively in favour of the Arabs. The growing frustration of the Zionist leadership vented itself in reprisals of ever greater severity against her neighbours. These attacks were out of all proportion to the raids by Arab fedayeen which provided Israel's pretext. They culminated in the

virtual destruction of the village of Samu in Jordan in November 1966.

1967—the Third Zionist War.

By the beginning of 1967 the men in charge of Israel's war machine had decided that the time had come to "teach the Arabs another lesson". Their plans had been laid for years past. They were confident of their overwhelming superiority and of their certainty of victory—though it suited Zionism's book to continue portraying Israel to its own people and to the outside world as David threatened by the Goliath of the Arab World. A new "war of survival" with the Arab enemy could also be exploited to restore confidence within Israel and abroad in the destiny of the Zionist state.

A pretext was needed and was supplied by the Egyptian reaction to reports that Israel was about to attack Syria and by the precipitate withdrawal of the U.N. peace-keeping force in Gaza and Sinai. The blitzkrieg launched by Israel in June 1967 went according to plan and resulted in a stunning victory on all fronts.

It also resulted in the seizure by Israel of all that was left of Palestine as well as the Sinai Peninsula and the south-west corner of Syria. Again hundreds of thousands of Arab inhabitants were uprooted from their homes during the fighting and its aftermath. All told more than half a million were left homeless in this second exodus of Arab refugees.

And as before Israel has refused—in defiance of U.N. resolutions—to withdraw from her territorial conquests or to allow the Arab inhabitants displaced by war to return to their homes. Since the June war Zionism has been busy consolidating its expansion by annexing Arab Jerusalem and planting military settlements on the West Bank of the Jordan.

LAND and PEOPLE — the targets of Zionism.

To justify her refusal to allow the refugees of both 1948 and 1967 to return to their homes, Israel argues that this would endanger her security. Must Israel's apprehensions on that score necessarily override the basic human rights of the Arab refugees to their homes and land? And is it not for Israel to find means of reconciling her security needs with justice for the refugees?

In fact, the root of Israel's antagonism to the refugee's return is not security but Zionist ideology. There is room in Israel for any number of Jewish newcomers from all over the world but not for the original Arab inhabitants and owners of the land. Such is the exclusive, racist nature of the Zionist state.

And so it is also with her territorial gains. If it is concern for security rather than outright territorial aggrandisement which has prompted Israel to launch repeated military adventures against her Arab neighbours, it is Zionism which tempts her always to cling to territory once gained by force of arms, in defiance of the principle now accepted in the civilised world that the acquisition of territory by military conquest is inadmissible. It is Zionism which proclaims the ingathering into Israel of

Jews from all the world and which thus supplies a motive and a justification for continuing territorial expansion. Zionism is an anachronism in the modern world and employs the morality of a bygone age to justify its usurpations.

With good reason, as they look back on what Zionism has done to them over the past fifty years and as they reflect not only on the claims of early Zionist extremists to an Israel extending "from the Nile to the Euphrates" but also on the arrogantly proclaimed determination of present-day Israeli Ministers to create "a new map, new frontiers and a new Israel", the Arabs fear further military adventures by Zionist Israel in future, further expansion at the expense of the Arab World and further expulsions of Arab people from their ancestral homes.

What is to be done? Bertrand Russell pointed the way in a message sent to the International Conference of Parliamentarians just before his death—

"All who want to see an end to bloodshed in the Middle East must ensure that any settlement does not contain the seeds of future conflict. Justice requires that the first step towards a settlement must be an Israeli withdrawal from all the territories occupied in June, 1967. A new world campaign is needed to help bring justice to the long-suffering people of the Middle East".

If the seeds of future conflict are to be avoided, there must be an end to Zionism. It has already caused three wars, inflicted irreparable human suffering and poisoned relations between the Arab World and its friends in the West. It needs to be condemned and outlawed before it does yet more harm.

"In the last analysis, these are the bare facts which strike our eyes; here was a people who lived on its own land for 1300 years. We came and turned the native Arabs into tragic refugees. And still we dare to slander and malign them, to besmirch their name. Instead of being deeply ashamed of what we did and of trying to undo some of the evil we committed by helping these unfortunate refugees, we justify our terrible acts and even attempt to glorify them."

Nathan Chofshi
Jewish Newsletter
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