

Toward Peace in Palestine

Many of the basic problems of life defy complete solution. The Jewish problem is one of these. It is made up of so many complex elements – religious, moral, political, economic, social, racial, historical – that it is a difficult task to even formulate it, let alone speak of “solving” it. Most of the solutions which are put forward are over-simplifications. But Jews and non-Jews can attempt to understand the problem and labor together for a free and just society. And in the measure society is just and free, in that measure Jews and Judaism will find their appropriate places and functions.

Palestine must occupy an important place in any consideration of the Jewish problem. It is unique among the lands of the earth – the Holy Land of the three great monotheistic faiths. It is also the Land of Israel, with which the People Israel have been associated from Bible time to this day. Would that it were large and empty enough to absorb millions of persecuted, wandering Jews and to be constituted into a Jewish state! Some object to this conception on the ground that politics and religion have nothing to do with one another. But politics is one of the most pro-

found of mankind's spiritual concerns. How men are to live together and be governed is a spiritual question with far-reaching implications. The fact remains that Palestine is small and is not empty. Another people have been in possession for centuries, and the concept of Palestine as a Jewish state is regarded by many Arabs as equivalent to a declaration of war against them. To those who contend that Palestine is the Promised Land of the Jews, I would say that it is necessary to distinguish between Messianic expectations and hard reality. When the late Chief Rabbi of Palestine, Rabbi Kuk, was asked by the Shaw Commission in 1930 what his attitude was toward restoration to the Jews of the site of Solomon's Temple, where the Mosque of Omar now stands, he replied that he believed with a perfect faith that this would come about in God's own time, but that meanwhile violence in achieving Messianic ends could not be countenanced by Judaism.

Some important Zionist leaders* contend now — they did not always do so — that room can be created in Palestine "for something like 400,000 families, or nearly two million souls" in addition to those already there, and that "this is likely to be approximately the number of people whom Palestine will in fact have to take care of very rapidly after the war." The only way this can be achieved, they maintain, is "by establishing a state of their own," that is, by constituting Palestine into a Jewish state or commonwealth.

But to make sure that there will be room in this small country for these additional two millions, some influential Zionists have adopted the idea put forward by the Palestine Royal Commission in its report of 1937† that the Arabs of Palestine, now numbering about a million, should be exchanged or transferred in the event of a partition of the country.‡ The Royal Commission spoke (p. 392) of an arrangement "for the transfer, voluntary or otherwise, of land and population"; and in a book of essays published in Palestine last year, B. Kaznelson, one of the foremost leaders of the Labor Party in Palestine, which constitutes the dominant group in the Jewish Agency, welcomed this initiative of the Commission.

Mr. Kaznelson, addressing the Arabs, says: "We shall be ready not to be your foes and even to support your aspirations for independence and unification, provided you cease disturbing us and provided you recognize Palestine as a Jewish state. Upon this presupposition there can be

*Cf. Chaim Weizmann, "Palestine's Role in the Solution of the Jewish Problem," *Foreign Affairs*, January 1942.

†Palestine Royal Commission, "Report," 1937 (Cmd. 5479).

‡*Editor's Note*: For comment on the Report, see "Alternatives to Partition," by Viscount Samuel, and "The Arabs and the Future of Palestine," by H. St. J. Philby, *Foreign Affairs*, October 1937. For a general treatment, see "The Palestine Situation Restated," by Felix Frankfurter, *Foreign Affairs*, 1931.

mutual understanding." As to the transfer of Arabs, he adds: "The question of the exchange of populations is likely to become pressing in our days. I believe this question to be *essential* (italics by the author) for us and also for them."*

On the other hand, the late George Antonius says: "There seems to be no valid reason why Palestine should not be constituted into an independent Arab state . . . No other solution seems practicable, except possibly at the cost of an unpredictable holocaust of Arab, Jewish and British lives . . . No code of morals can justify the persecution of one people in an attempt to relieve the persecution of another. The cure for the eviction of Jews from Germany is not to be sought in the eviction of the Arabs from their homeland; and the relief of Jewish distress may not be accomplished at the cost of inflicting a corresponding distress upon an innocent and peaceful population."†

The antithesis is complete. These extreme aspirations are clearly incompatible.

This is not to say that there is a lack of reassurances from one side to the other. In his article in *Foreign Affairs*, Dr. Weizmann says that in the Jewish state of Palestine there will be "complete civil and political equality of rights for all citizens without distinction of race or religion, and, in addition, the Arabs will enjoy full autonomy in their own internal affairs." Mr. Antonius says that in an independent Arab state Jews "would live in peace, security and dignity, and enjoy full rights of citizenship . . . and the widest freedom in the pursuit of their spiritual and cultural ideals . . . Jewish values could flourish and the Jewish genius have the freest play to seek inspiration in the land of its ancient connection."

These assurances of tolerance are sincerely meant. Yet the basic contrast persists, in that the one assumes the Jews are to rule and the other is predicated upon Arab hegemony.

The purpose of this article is to warn of the danger of war between Jews and Arabs, and to offer an alternative based upon a reasonable compromise. The uncompromising who believe that this collision is inevitable are supposedly making their preparations. Those who believe in the necessity and the possibility of compromise should also be preparing. Nothing is more dangerous and enervating than the advice to postpone all thinking and planning until the end of the war. The war will not end and the peace will not come unless in every field the utmost exertions are made to think things through and to work things out now.

The indispensable prerequisite for a reasonable compromise is, I am convinced, that America's moral and political authority be thrown into

*B. Katznelson, "In the Furnace," p. 168-9.

†George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1939, p. 410.

the balance. In view of the intransigence of many responsible leaders on both sides the adjustment may have to be imposed over their opposition. Only organized world democracy, convinced of the truth and the necessity of the Atlantic Charter, can have enough authority to do this; and it is America, I submit, which must be chiefly responsible for the practical fulfillment of the principles of this great pronouncement.

Great Britain's authority, unhappily, has been impaired for the time being in Palestine and in the Middle East. The association of the United States with Britain in the Holy Land can help reestablish the authority necessary to keep Palestine from becoming a menace to the world's peace. America is greatly trusted. She has no territorial or imperialist ambitions here. She has served the Middle East generously and unselfishly on numerous occasions, and she should continue to do so. She must not leave it to perfidious Japan sanctimoniously to hold up ideals of freedom and union before the peoples of the East. She should join Britain in helping find out and, if necessary, impose a reasonable compromise. But if the American people are to be drawn into this task in Palestine they must know beforehand that it is not simple or one to be undertaken lightly. They may become involved in the controversies and even in the hatreds which, unfortunately, seem to be almost inseparable from the Palestine problem.

Palestine as a Jewish state: Palestine as an Arab state. The two conceptions leave little room for compromise. But a search for one should be begun. The first step — and the sooner it is taken the better — should be an announcement that the adjustment will not include either of these alternatives. Such an announcement might help dissipate the increasingly bellicose atmosphere and might, perhaps, turn both Jewish and Arab propaganda in the direction of peace and understanding. The ordinary Jew and the ordinary Arab have no hatred for one another. They will rejoice over the prospect of a reasonable settlement which might enable them to live together and to develop their common country in peace. The search for a compromise might well be furthered, too, by the selection of a few Englishmen and Americans to cooperate with Jews and Arabs in canvassing the possibilities. There is much material that could be studied usefully.

I shall try now to give the general outlines of the kind of compromise which I think might be imposed upon the Jews and the Arabs by a sufficiently high moral and political authority without giving reasonable cause for rebellion. It is the outcome of many years of study, for the past 20 years in Palestine itself. It is not, I must admit, the official program of any political party. * I am putting it forward now in the hope that it may

*I may be permitted to say, however, that there are Jews and Arabs of some consequence who are in accord with its general purport.

serve as material for anyone who is convinced that the search for a compromise is essential. The suggestion of other ideas would be advantageous.

The proposals which I bring forward are based on the great idea of union. Union must be the guiding political ideal of the United Nations if they are to achieve victory. The unbridled greed of those who have ruled hitherto, and the narrow chauvinism of so many nations, can be overcome only if a really free and really united world is created. The Palestine situation must be raised to the high plane where the gigantic struggle to build a mighty union of free nations is going on. Union for Palestine may be said to have three aspects:

1. Union between the Jews and the Arabs within a bi-national Palestine.
2. Union of Palestine, Transjordan, Syria and the Lebanon in an economic and political federation. These lands form a geographic unit and constituted a political and economic union at several times between ancient Semitic days and the First World War.
3. Union of this federation with an Anglo-American union which is assumed to be part of that greater union of the free nations now laboring to be born out of the ruins of the decaying world.

I should like to consider each of these aspects in some detail.

Experience in the new states set up by the Treaty of Versailles has shown that a successful bi-national arrangement is hardly possible unless the majority and the minority nations or peoples constituting the state have equal political rights. The conception of minority rights has broken down in practice. It has to give way to equal rights for nations and peoples within the state as well as for individual citizens. Palestine as a Jewish state would mean Jewish rule over the Arabs; Palestine as an Arab state would mean Arab rule over the Jews. Palestine as a bi-national state must provide constitutionally for equal political rights and duties for both the Jewish and the Arab nations, regardless of which is the majority and which the minority. In this way neither people will dominate the other. But a constitutional provision alone is not sufficient. There must be effective guarantees that this political equality will be carried out in practice. The nature of these guarantees will be determined by the nature of the federation of which Palestine is to be a member, and also by the nature of the union of the free nations of which this federation is to be a part. I shall return to this point later.

If the political equality of the two peoples in Palestine is accepted as a part of the compromise we are seeking, there seems to be no good reason why a beginning should not be made now with a bi-national administration, so that officials may be trained as soon as possible for the great tasks which confront them. On more than one occasion Britain has held

out hopes that the people of Palestine would receive an increasing share in the government of the country. These hopes have not been realized. If it be objected that the Palestinians are politically immature, the democratic way to attain maturity would be to place political responsibility upon them. The time has come to put Palestinians, both Jews and Arabs, in charge of non-controversial government departments and to make them members of the Executive Council of the Government. That would be a step forward of the highest educational and political value.

A modest way of associating the population of Palestine with the war effort has also been suggested. It has been proposed that a consultative body of representative citizens be appointed under the chairmanship of the High Commissioner. He would call the group together at intervals to make statements on the war and to consult on such matters as supplies and rationing, recruiting, the cost of living, agricultural and industrial production, profiteering and social welfare. But nothing has come of this suggestion.

It is a mistake to think that new arrangements will come into being automatically after the war. The time to begin to prepare the Jews and the Arabs for responsible duties in the bi-national Palestinian body politic is now.

Immigration is in many ways the crux of the problem and it is on this issue that agreement will be most difficult. There are 17 million Jews in the world. Understandably, the Jews want to admit hundreds of thousands of the homeless and persecuted to Palestine. But a long time would be required to settle even the two million whom some think the country could absorb. The astounding advances which the scientific knowledge and the devotion of the Jews have brought about in the agriculture and industry of Palestine might conceivably shorten this period. But today the country does not grow enough food to support its present population; and in order to import food, particularly from neighboring countries, peace between Jews and Arabs is necessary. If the capacity to absorb immigrants is to be increased by making Palestine largely industrial rather than agricultural, this will increase its dependence upon the Middle East for markets; and in this case also there must be peace between the two peoples.

The problem is dual. Taking into account both the country's economic absorptive capacity and the political situation, how can as large a Jewish population as possible be settled in Palestine? How is this to be accomplished within the framework of the suggested compromise? We begin again with a negative aspect of the proposed adjustment in order to reach a positive conclusion. No Jew can agree to a fiat which would arbitrarily stop immigration into Palestine, the Land of Israel. This is the main reason why Jews have been unanimous in opposing the British

Government's White Paper of 1939.* Of the many arbitrary decrees included in that unhappy document, the one to permit no further Jewish immigration after five years from 1939 unless the Arabs are prepared to acquiesce in it was the most unfortunate. The Arabs will not agree to unrestricted Jewish immigration. It would build up a Jewish majority and might mean Jewish dominance in Palestine. We must recognize that this is a genuine impasse and that a way out must be found.

The establishment of a federation would help resolve the problem. If and when the federation came into being, the whole question of numbers in Palestine would lose its present primary significance for the Arabs. For a federation of the four states in question, whatever its form, would include an Arab population of several million. The Arabs would be relieved of their present fear of being swamped and dominated by a majority of Jews. A Jewish majority in the federation is hardly conceivable.

It should also be borne in mind that since the outbreak of war Jewish immigration into Palestine has been practically at a standstill. This means that the proportion of Jews to Arabs in Palestine is growing progressively smaller, for the annual rate of natural increase of the Arabs is much higher (2.7 percent) than that of the Jews (1.3 percent). The present Arab population is estimated at about a million; in five years' time it might number rather more than 1,200,000† The Jewish population is estimated to be about 500,000; if there is no important Jewish immigration in the next five years the rate of natural increase will bring this to only about 540,000. In other words, the Arab population in 1947 would be larger than the Jewish population by more than 600,000. If, therefore, the political controversy between the Jews and the Arabs were composed, as it might be through the establishment of a federation, several hundred thousand Jewish refugees could be admitted to Palestine with advantage to the country and without disturbing the political balance. The establishment of a federation might also be advantageous to the Jews, as well as to the federation itself, by making possible agreements under which the Governments of Transjordan, Syria and the Lebanon would permit a given number of refugee Jews to settle in those countries without extending the Jewish National Home beyond the borders of Palestine.

Thus it seems clear that a federation would make it possible for many thousands of Jewish refugees to find room in Palestine and other parts of the federation, and this with Arab agreement instead of Arab animosity.

As to the economic absorptive capacity of Palestine, it should be pointed out that the Jews have given definite proof that it is greater than

*"Palestine Statement of Policy," 1939 (Cmd. 6019).

†Report of the Palestine Royal Commission (Cmd. 5479), p. 281.

had been supposed. The Jews have shown that there is more water in the country, more arable land, better land, the possibility of raising more diversified crops, more raw materials for industry, more chances of establishing industries both for home consumption and for export, than had been imagined. Whereas formerly the maximum population of present-day Palestine had been estimated at about three million, with agriculture as its chief economic activity, today responsible authorities admit that this maximum can be raised to four million.

The economic absorptive capacity both of Palestine and of the federation ought to be determined from time to time. This would be useful not only in selecting immigrants and determining their numbers, but also in drawing up any large-scale plan for the country's development. One of the first constructive tasks of the federation, under the aegis of the free nations and with their financial and scientific help, should be to work out such a plan of development for all the constituent parts of the federation, and to put it into execution. An Anglo-American undertaking of this sort in the name of the union of the free nations would go a long way toward bringing the compromise to fruitful success.

If for some unfortunate reason the federation should not come into being, the immigration question in Palestine alone would be made—as I think I have shown—that much more baffling. Even so, we should have to try to face that difficult eventuality as well as possible. For example, a proposal might be offered somewhat similar to that made in 1936, after the Arab rebellion had begun. At that time it was suggested that the number of Jewish immigrants be so calculated that at the end of a ten-year period the Jews would constitute no more than 40 percent of the total population. The Jewish population then numbered 400,000. It was estimated that under the plan, which was sponsored by a number of responsible Jews and Arabs, this figure would be doubled by 1946.

A similar procedure could be used now. It would have two basic provisions. First, whatever percentages and periods might be fixed, the Jewish population would never be permitted to become more than one half of the total population; and second, instead of dividing Jewish immigration into equal yearly quotas, as large a number as economically possible should be admitted in the years immediately following the close of the war to mitigate the fate of thousands of homeless Jews. This is a method which should be adopted, however, only after all hope of finding a better way has been abandoned. It has the fault that it again raises the majority-minority complex to primary political importance, as at present; whereas federation would reduce it to a secondary place.

In the preceding paragraphs I have attempted to show that a reasonable compromise is possible on the two chief points at issue—a bi-national government and Jewish immigration. Obviously, other matters of

tional government and Jewish immigration. Obviously, other matters of great importance remain to be settled also, such as land, employment and agricultural settlement.

The Jews are able to help as no other people can or will to build up the proposed federation as an integral part of a union of the free peoples. Their help can be scientific, financial, social, industrial and agricultural. But even before the start of the delicate and complicated process of establishing a political federation there can be an economic union of Palestine, Transjordan, Syria and Lebanon, and these countries can join with their neighbors in economic agreements.

These developments are possible because of the war. The four small states in question will be less and less able to stand the rigors of the war unless they form themselves into an economic bloc for the production of food and the manufacture of other goods and to arrange to receive supplies in common. One way of forming this very desirable economic union might be to develop the Middle East Supply Center to its full capacity for usefulness. This wartime organ is based on two ideas: its make-up is Anglo-American, which means that it pools Anglo-American resources for conducting the joint war effort in the Middle East; and it is giving blood and bone to the conception that the Middle East is a unit formed of contiguous countries with economic needs so vital in time of war that differences over their political borders and other matters become of secondary importance. This conception ought to be carried over into the peace, and I believe it is possible if the basic ideas of the Middle East Supply Center are worked out with efficiency and vision.

Another factor in the suggested compromise is Jerusalem, Holy City of three religions, which might become the federal headquarters or capital. Geography and history alike fit it for this great destiny. Should it once again become a center of spiritual and intellectual exchange, it will restore contact between Judaism, Christianity and Islam. So far these three faiths have failed in their efforts to create a society based upon ideals of righteousness and mercy. Yet despite the afflictions visited upon Israel in the Christian West, we may not despair of the West. And Israel, which once achieved great things for mankind in the Middle East, can acquire renewed youth and deeper wisdom if it is re-invigorated and rooted once more in the ancestral soil. The new Jerusalem, then, would symbolize a new relationship between Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the cradle of their origin; and in the New Jerusalem they would work out together part of their common problems with the old-new East which contains among its other elements the vast, vibrating, spiritual powers of Russia, India and China.

A compromise settlement of the Palestine problem such as I have outlined above would be doubly guaranteed: by the federation and by the

union of the free nations. But will this latter union be created? And how can we be sure that it will be any more effective or that its members will do their duty toward peace through it any more truly than they did through the League of Nations? Millions of men and women are asking these questions. When Vice-President Wallace and Mr. Sumner Welles speak eloquently and sincerely of the free world that is to be made, millions take courage. But afterwards they begin to ask themselves if, after all, it is only words. No answer can be found for this historic question except in the heart and the determination of each one of us individually. By now we should have learned that peace is indivisible and that there is no chance of political understanding in the world unless organized world democracy assumes responsibility for it by assuming responsibility for the security and the economic well-being of every nation, regardless of race, creed or color.

In making our Palestine compromise work we can learn much from the mistakes of the mandatory system. The principle of trusteeship which was implicit in that system is sound. But let the mandatories ask themselves if they have always acted like true trustees. Whatever the nature of the guarantee or trusteeship which is adopted after this war, experience has taught us that it should not assume the form of mandates granted to single countries or to groups of countries which have imperialistic, military or other selfish interests in the region involved.

Israel is an imperfect instrument through which universal religious and moral principles have been communicated to mankind. These principles call for the creation of a visible, tangible society founded upon justice and mercy. The utterances of the Prophets of Israel contain as powerful revolutionary ferment as mankind has ever known. Until Israel and the nations of mankind succeed in establishing a universal society based upon those ideals there will continue to be a Jewish problem. That is Israel's destiny.
