

To the Editor of the *New York Times*
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COMPROMISE FOR PALESTINE

The year 1945 will probably be a year of fateful decision for the world, and it behooves those of us who are concerned for the fate of the Holy Land to offer constructive suggestions, if we have any. It is clear that Palestine will not be constituted as either an Arab state or a Jewish state. It is clear also that the White Paper of 1939 offers no hope for future peace development.

It is therefore necessary to seek compromise, and the first task of all men of good-will is to teach and preach compromise and to elaborate

such forms of compromise as they believe to be reasonable and practicable.

The very idea of compromise—the word itself—has been made abhorrent to too many of the inhabitants of Palestine. Their political education has not yet taught them that political compromise is the very breath of life of the Western democracies.

I have talked with many Jews and many Arabs during my twenty-two years in Palestine. Upon this basis I venture the assertion that a compromise can be found which will be acceptable to the ordinary Jew and the ordinary Arab. The compromise I speak about is one upon the basis of which no Arab leader could again get Arabs to revolt and “take to the hills,” and no Jewish leader could get Jews to put pressure upon the rest of the world. The compromise I speak about is not easy to work out and does not offer a solution overnight. But it is a reasonable answer and is possible of being put into practice.

This compromise contains a number of elements, each of which requires careful study and detailed elaboration. On some points this had been done, on others not. What I shall attempt here is but a cursory glance.

There are three worlds interested in Palestine—Jewish, Christian and Moslem. For this reason any answer to the Palestine question must have inter-religious and international character. Politically, the international background may be said to consist of three main factors—the United Nations, the union of Arab states now coming into being, and the Jewish people.

A Middle East Regional Council, the setting up of which by the United Nations, one is bound to assume, would have specific functions in relation to Palestine, and for this purpose its Palestine section would consist of representatives of these three international bodies. The Jewish representative would be chosen by a reconstituted and strengthened Jewish Agency. The Regional Council would be the guarantor of any compromise arrangements that are made. Among other things this Regional Council would be responsible for security and armed forces, and it would act as the final authority in disputes on basic issues.

This Regional Council would have its seat preferably in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the Holy City of these three great monotheistic faiths. A historic mission will be fulfilled if Jerusalem can be made increasingly the seat of interreligious, international organizations.

The administration of Palestine should be on a bi-national basis—namely, partly between Jews and Arabs in government, so that neither would rule the other. It is not easy anywhere in the world to work out administrative machinery for a multinational council. The most successful example is, of course, Switzerland, which has been at peace for gener-

ations. But though practical bi-national constitutions are difficult to achieve, they are not impossible. Some plans have been prepared in this direction, and it is essential that the aid of experts and men of experience be enlisted in this basic task.

One way of meeting some of the difficulties is to give the Middle East Regional Council the power of appointing a High Commissioner and a few additional key men who are neither Jews nor Arabs. How long such an arrangement would continue would depend on how a binational constitution for Palestine worked generally.

Partition of the country? But that is a compromise that settles nothing. All it will do is to create two irreconcilable and activist, on either side of the borders. That is the way to never-ceasing warfare, the kind that made the Balkans a byword. Partition also mutilates and cripples the living Jewish conception of the land of Israel, the Holy Land. Partition, furthermore, reduces the area available for Jewish settlement in Palestine. Partition may appear to be a rough and ready way of cutting the Gordian knot, but this surgical operation would kill the patient. If there be no mangling by partition, there is a chance of bringing the diseased body to health, even though this task be difficult and long drawn out.

If partition were carried out because of a declaration by some statesmen concerning a Jewish state or commonwealth, that would be nothing short of misfortune.

A fruitful way of compromise is to seek a solution in the whole of Palestine which will commend itself as reasonable to the ordinary Jew and Arab and to Christians everywhere, even if some political leaders do not acquiesce. The one or the other among these leaders may have engaged themselves deeply in state solution on either side—have burned their bridges behind them. That may be regrettable but is not irreparable. Their peoples can be trusted to recognize a reasonable, feasible compromise when they see one.

But one should be quick to add that a break ought to be made now with the present system in Palestine, where there are hundreds of British officials of all kinds in posts which could be filled satisfactorily by Jews and Arabs. Aside from the higher British salaries, which are an unnecessary burden on the budget of this small country, what is of fundamental importance is that the presence of so many British officials deprives the population of its natural right to participate more fully in its own government. If mistakes are made they should be made by the population. That is the way in which political responsibility is taught and learned.

I speak not only of the large number of lesser government posts in dis-

tricts and municipalities but more especially of higher offices. No Jew or Arab is a district commissioner, head of a department, president of a court or a member of the executive council of government.

It is time that a substantial beginning be made in this direction. There are certain departments where having an Arab or a Jewish head would present no insurmountable difficulty. In offices where complications at the moment are too great, Jews and Arabs can be appointed as deputies and thus prepare themselves for a more normal future.

A very great additional advantage in appointing Jews and Arabs to responsible positions without further delay would be the creation in this way of a corps of men of two communities who would learn to know and respect one another through being engaged upon essential tasks for the good of their common country, Palestine. This would be a potent means of bridging the chasm which constantly widens between Jews and Arabs and between them and the British.

If it be asked what non-Palestinians are to be appointed by the Regional Council, I would answer that they be preponderantly British, for the following reasons: first, it is impossible to disregard the fact that of all the United Nations the British have had and now have more important interests here than any others.

Secondly, the British have greater administrative experience, and though one cannot say that they have been over-successful in Palestine, still under the proposed new dispensation it would be reasonable to suppose that they would propose to the Regional Council some of their best men.

Thirdly, since international administration has nowhere been effective, one nation has to be entrusted with the main burden of administration. Whereas the Regional Council should be responsible for the major policy, the chief responsibility for actual administration as sketched here must be committed to one of the United Nations.

It is hardly necessary to point out that the regional Council is something far different from the Mandate Commission, which has but advisory powers, and that the position of Great Britain as tutelary administrator is very different from that of Great Britain as the ruler of Palestine.

Jewish immigration, which is a large crux of the situation, should be permitted up to parity; that is, up to one-half of the population. Present official figures show that there are more than five hundred thousand Jews and more than one million Arabs in the country.

Nazi persecutions have massacred so many hundreds of thousands of Jewish men and women that it is thought there may be only about one and a half million left in all Europe outside Russia and the non-invaded countries. For tens of thousands emigration is a crying physical and spiri-

tual need. The young almost without exception want to come to the new life of Palestine.

If, as Dr. Weizmann has advocated particularly, immediate stress be laid upon bringing into Palestine as many as possible of the 100,000 children who may be left, all too many without parents, then the whole Jewish and Christian world and—I make bold to say—much of the Islamic world would back such a project. It might be more practical if formulated thus: the tempo of immigration to Palestine is to be dependent upon the economic capacity of Palestine to absorb new immigrants. A generous and gallant attempt to rush immigrants into the country regardless of the economic situation would result in catastrophe.

One task of the Regional Council would be to determine and help develop the economic absorptive capacity of the country from time to time. Jews have already proved that this capacity is far greater than has been believed, if given a fair chance they will increase this through patience, love and self-sacrifice. But this should not be their task alone. The Regional Council should work out and be responsible for the development of a plan for the whole country—Jews and Arabs alike.

Immigration up to parity would free the Jews from the minority status which is theirs in other parts of the world. It would not, however, produce a Jewish majority and therefore would not upset the political balance in Palestine.

One often hears the question asked: What about Jewish immigration after parity has been attained? In the first place, in order to maintain parity, Jews would have the right to additional immigration each year to make up for the difference between the lower Jewish birth rate and the higher Arab birth rate. But more important that this, our whole argument is based on the conviction that if there be a number of years of cooperation between Jews and Arabs and peaceful development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants, the chances are that further understanding between Jews and Arabs as to number would be achieved.

I have been trying to outline some of the terms of a reasonable, feasible compromise which I am convinced the two peoples interested can safely accept, even though many of their leaders may not be able to do so.

Yet not compromise comes to pass by itself. This or any other compromise must be labored for. The time has come for this. Time is passing quickly and the opportunity must be seized. For this reason the establishment of an Arab union at this juncture is of the greatest importance.

Nations are now to have a responsible address to whom they themselves and others can be referred; and as to the Palestine problem, the chances for compromise are thus made much brighter because discussion

is lifted out of the narrow parochialism of Palestine politics and put on the higher and wider plane of international interests.

I have shared hope for many years that a political union of the autonomous lands of Palestine, Trans-Jordan and Lebanon might be effected. I have hoped for this because it would be a step forward in Arab unity generally, and this is sooner or later a historical necessity, and an Arab union would be the cornerstone union in the Middle East generally. All of this seems to me to offer greater possibilities for Jewish-Arab understanding and an atmosphere of mutual confidence.

But whatever momentary form an Arab union is to take when the time is ripe, it is not yet too late for Jewish leaders and Arab leaders to come together to discuss possible compromise—this or any other. Arab union and Jewish Agency—let them find ways of meeting informally and then officially. If they meet, a compromise can be found.

In order to hammer out compromise, ground is to be prepared. Leaders must be given a chance to adjust their mind, the hearts of two peoples must be softened, statesmen in whose hands decisions rest must be persuaded, political theorists and economists must be called in. Time is running short and there is much work to do.

What a task before the British and others to make up for lost opportunities and to bring two peoples together! I do not share the theory that the British have deliberately held them apart. But the British have not really exerted themselves, certainly never systematically and as a matter of major policy, to bring the two peoples together.

An Egyptian Arab recently put forward the following considerations: "Civilization," he said, "began in large measure in the eastern Mediterranean, including Egypt, Babylon and Greece.

"The wheel of history has now come to a full turn, and the new civilization of which mankind is in such desperate need can find its beginnings here again. Two of us together, Arabs and Jews, can do it. We need each other. We Arabs do not need your money so much as your great experience and your great schooling. Let us sit down together and view our problem from this larger point of view. Numbers and machinery are certainly of importance and we must extend ourselves to the full in order to work out satisfactory arrangements.

"We can do this only if we look upon such arrangements as ancillary to the main spiritual problem of finding our soul again. Together we can develop this important part of the world for the benefit of mankind. This has become again a center of communications—not caravans and camels any more, but airplanes and lorries carrying men and goods and ideas. Have we not leaders of large enough outlook and enough courage to face this task?"

His question is indeed the basic question.