THE JEWISH NATIONAL HOME IN PALESTINE

HEARINGS BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
SEVENTY-EIGHTH CONGRESS
SECOND SESSION
ON
H. Res. 418 and H. Res. 419
RESOLUTIONS RELATIVE TO THE JEWISH NATIONAL HOME IN PALESTINE

FEBRUARY 8, 9, 15, and 16, 1944

WITH APPENDIX OF DOCUMENTS RELATING TO THE JEWISH NATIONAL HOME IN PALESTINE

Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Affairs
great British Government, I accept all your demands. This may have been worded unfortunately, for there was no doubt in my mind that it referred to the requests for munitions of war which he demanded with great frequency. Nothing would persuade the Sherif Hussein that it did not refer to everything that he had asked for in the acquisition of territories to form the Arabian Empire which inspired every waking moment of his life.

So many are the historians of the Arab revolt and so many are the stories of events which one person had from another who knew a third who was present, that I venture to send you this account of an interview at which there were only two people present and one has long since passed to that paradise that the great prophet promised to the faithful.

I am, Sir,
Your obedient servant.

Whorlton Grange, Barnard Castle, Co. Durham.
(Letter to The Times, February 21, 1939.)

C. E. VICKERY.

T. E. LAWRENCE

Draft Preface, dated 18th November, 1922, to an abridgment (not published) of the Oxford Text of Seven Pillars of Wisdom.

The book dates itself to 1919, when powerful elements in the British Government were seeking to evade their war-time obligations to the Arabs. That stage ended in March 1921, when Mr. Winston Churchill took charge of the Middle East. He set honesty before expediency in order to fulfil our promises in the letter and in the spirit. He executed the whole McMahon undertaking (called a treaty by some who have not seen it) for Palestine, for Trans-Jordania, and for Arabia. In Mesopotamia he went far beyond its provisions, giving to the Arabs more, and reserving for us much less, than Sir Henry McMahon had thought fit.

In the affairs of French Syria he was not able to interfere, and the Sherif of Mecca can fairly complain that the settlement there is not yet in accordance with the Anglo-French agreement of 1916, or with our word to him. I say “not yet” advisedly, since the McMahon proposals (being based on racial and economic reasons) were likely to have imposed themselves eventually, even if Mr. Churchill’s progressive British military withdrawal from Mesopotamia had not come to prejudice the future of all the Arab areas.

I do not wish to publish secret documents, nor to make long explanations: but must put on record my conviction that England is out of the Arab affair with clean hands. Some Arab advocates (the most vociferous joined our ranks after the Armistice) have rejected my judgment on this point. Like a tedious Pensioner I showed them my wounds (over sixty I have, each scar evidence of a pain incurred in Arab service) as proof I had worked sincerely on their side. They found me out-of-date; and I was happy to withdraw from a political milieu which had never been congenial. (The Letters of T. E. Lawrence. Edited by D. Garnett. Cape, 1938 p. 345.)

It is my deliberate opinion that the Winston Churchill settlement of 1921–1922 (in which I shared) honourably fulfils the whole of the promises we made to the Arabs, in so far as the so-called British spheres are concerned. (From a letter to Professor William Yale, dated October 22, 1929. The Letters of T. E. Lawrence, p. 671.)

Mr. Winston Churchill was entrusted by our harassed Cabinet with the settlement of the Middle East; and in a few weeks, at his conference in Cairo, he made straight all the tangle, finding solutions, fulfilling (I think) our promises in letter and spirit (where humanly possible) without sacrificing any interest of our Empire or any interest of the people concerned. So we were quit of the war-time Eastern adventure, with clean hands, but three years too late to earn the gratitude which peoples, if not states, can pay. (Footnote to p. 276 of Seven Pillars of Wisdom (1935).)

Documents submitted for the record by Dr. A. H. Silver: (1) Statements of the Emir Feisal, leader of the Arab delegation at the Peace Conference at Paris in 1919, excluding Palestine from the Arab domain and agreeing to cooperate with the Zionists for the establishment of a Jewish Palestine. (2) Statements on progressing Palestine since
ON THE GROWTH OF ARAB POPULATION

Statement by Mr. Malcolm MacDonald, British Secretary of State for the Colonies (Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, November 24, 1938, Vol. 341, Col. 1994).

"* * * The Arabs cannot say that the Jews are driving them out of their country. If not a single Jew had come to Palestine after 1918, I believe the Arab population of Palestine would still have been round about the figure 600,000 at which it had been stable under Turkish rule. It is because the Jews who have come to Palestine bring modern health services and other advantages that Arab men and women who would have been dead are alive today, that Arab children who would never have drawn breath have been born and grown strong. It is not only the Jews who have benefited from the Balfour Declaration. They can deny it as much as they like, but materially the Arabs in Palestine have gained very greatly from the Balfour Declaration."

EXCERPTS FROM PALESTINE ROYAL COMMISSION REPORT (COND. 5479) JULY 1937 (PP. 125-129) CONCERNING BENEFICIAL EFFECTS OF THE JEWISH NATIONAL HOME ON ARAB PROGRESS IN PALESTINE

"In Arab as in Jewish Palestine the most striking fact is the growth of population. It has risen since 1920 from about 600,000 to about 950,000 and in this case, unlike the Jewish, the rise has been due in only a slight degree to immigration. No accurate estimate can be made of the number of Arabs who have come into Palestine from neighbouring of Arab lands and settled there, but it may be reckoned that roughly nine-tenths of the growth has been due to natural increase, and it has been a growth of over 50 percent, in 17 years."

"* * * a steadily increasing number of effendi and other educated Arabs have obtained posts in the Government service since the British Occupation, and some of them high-salaried posts. Apart from that, it is difficult to detect any deterioration in the economic position of the Arab upper class. Landowners have sold substantial pieces of land at a figure far above the price it could have fetched before the War. * * * Partly, no doubt, as the result of land-sales the effendi class has been able to make substantial investments of capital. Some of this has gone towards increased production, especially of fruit, from the land they have retained. At least six times more Arab-owned land is now planted with citrus than in 1920. Arab citrus plantations in the Maritime Plain now cover 135,000 dunums, and represent an investment of £6,500,000."

"Some of the capital has been directed to building houses for lease or sale or to industrial enterprise. The development of Arab industry, though not comparable, of course, with that of Jewish industry, has made progress. It appears from the Government Report for 1933 that the number of Arab "industrial undertakings," which was about 1,200 before the War, had risen to about 2,200. Among relatively large-scale industries are soap, flour milling, bricks and tiles, cigarettes and tobacco, cotton, wool and silk weaving, salt quarrying, stone and lime, bedsteads, nails, wearing apparel, confectionery, and alcoholic liquor. No official statistics are available as to the amount of capital invested in this industrial field as a whole; but it has certainly increased in the course of the last few years, as has the amount of Arab bank deposits."

"It is the condition of the fellaheen, still the great majority of the Arab population, that must be regarded as the dominant factor in any estimate of the economic progress of Arab Palestine. It cannot, unhappily, be questioned that the standard of living among the fellaheen is still low. Like other agricultural communities they have suffered from the world-wide fall in prices. They have suffered, too, from severe and repeated droughts and consequent bad harvests. Some of the obstacles to their progress have been partially removed. Some of the cramping
mash'a) system of land tenure has been replaced by individual ownership. Their burden of debt has been eased. The Government has done much to relieve them by reducing and remitting taxation and providing loans. Tithe was reduced, commuted, and finally replaced by a more equitable tax on rural property. The development of cooperation has been slow and somewhat discouraging, but at least a beginning has been made and over 60 Arab Cooperative Societies are now in existence. There is evidence, moreover, that some fellahs are at any rate on the way to becoming better cultivators. If the great majority are still wedded to their old, primitive ways, there are some who are learning better methods, using better seed and better tools, under official guidance and inspection.

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** the rate of wages has steadily gone up. The daily wage paid to an Arab for skilled labour is now from 250 to 600 mils, and for unskilled labour from 100 to 180 mils. In Syria the wage ranges from 67 mils in older industries to 124 mils in newer ones. Factory labour in Iraq is paid from 40 to 60 mils.

"Nor is it only in the towns that the landless fellah finds a livelihood. The Government's programme of public works means a continuous demand for labour, and a large number of Arabs are employed on roads and bridges and the like. Moreover, the great expansion of citrus cultivation, Arab as well as Jewish, has greatly increased the demand for agricultural labour; and for that, too, the rate of wages has risen. For general agricultural work it was 80 to 120 mils a day in 1931, and 100 to 160 mils in 1935. For tree-planting and nursery work it was 100 to 150 mils in 1931, and 150 to 200 mils in 1935."

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** The whole range of public services, the initiation of which we described in the preceding chapter, has steadily developed, to the benefit of the fellahaeen. Except in periods of 'disturbance,' their lives and property have been reasonably safe. Their civil rights have been safeguarded by the Courts. The growth in their numbers has been largely due to the health services, combating malaria, reducing the infant death rate, improving water supply and sanitation. Education, as yet it only meets half the demand, has to that extent enabled the rising generation to profit more easily from the technical instruction given in the Arab Agricultural College or by official advisers in the villages. Better roads and quicker transport have meant higher returns on market produce. In sum, it may be said that though much more could have been done if more money had been available, the equipment of Palestine with social services is more advanced than that of any of its neighbours, and far more advanced than that of an Indian province or an African colony.

It remains to examine the validity of the Jewish claim that this advance has been largely due to the establishment of the National Home. After considering the evidence submitted to us, both orally and in writing, by the Jewish representatives on this question, we have come to the following conclusions:

(i) The large import of Jewish capital into Palestine has had a general fructifying effect on the economic life of the whole country.
(ii) The expansion of Arab industry and citrus culture has been largely financed by the capital thus obtained.
(iii) Jewish example has done much to improve Arab cultivation, especially of citrus.
(iv) Owing to Jewish development and enterprise the employment of Arab labour has increased in urban areas, particularly in the ports.
(v) The reclamation and antimalaria work undertaken in Jewish "colonies" have benefited all Arabs in the neighbourhood.
(vi) Institutions, founded with Jewish funds primarily to serve the National Home, have also served the Arab population. Hadassah, for example, treats Arab patients, notably at the Tuberculosis Hospital at Safad and the Radiology Institute at Jerusalem, admits Arab countryfolk to the clinics of its Rural Sick Benefit Fund, and does much infant welfare work for Arab mothers.
(vii) The general beneficent effect of Jewish immigration on Arab welfare is illustrated by the fact that the increase in the Arab population is most marked in urban areas affected by Jewish development. A comparison of the Census returns in 1922 and 1931 shows that, six years ago, the increase per cent. in Haifa was 86, in Jaffa 62, in Jerusalem 37, while in purely Arab towns such as Nablus and Hebron it was only 7, and at Gaza there was a decrease of 2 percent.
By note of August 9, 1920, Lord Curzon challenged the right of the United States to make protest against the economic partition of former Turkish territories. Lord Curzon wrote:

15. The draft mandates for Mesopotamia and for Palestine, which have been prepared with a view to secure equality of treatment and subjects, of all states who are members of the League of Nations, will, when approved by the Allies interested, be communicated to the Council of the League of Nations. In these circumstances His Majesty’s Government, while fully appreciating the suggestion for discussing with the United States Government the various propositions mentioned by you, with which they are in full sympathy, are none the less of the opinion that the terms of the mandates can only properly be discussed at the Council of the League of Nations by the signatories of the Covenant.

In Secretary Colby’s reply of November 20, 1920, the right of the United States to participate in the disposition of former German and Turkish territories was emphatically asserted. It was said that—

Such powers as the Allied and Associated nations may enjoy or wield, in the determination of the governmental status of the mandated areas, accrued to them as a direct result of the war against the Central powers. The United States, as a participant in that conflict and as a contributor to its successful issue, cannot consider any of the Associated powers, the smallest not less than itself, debarred from the discussion of any of its consequences, or from participation in the rights and privileges secured under the mandates provided for in the treaties of peace.

This Government notes with interest your statement that the draft mandates for Mesopotamia and for Palestine, which have been prepared with a view to secure equality of treatment and opportunity for the commerce, citizens and subjects of all states which are members of the League of Nations, will, when approved by the interested Allied powers, be communicated to the Council of the League of Nations. The United States is, undoubtedly, one of the powers directly interested in the terms of the mandates, and I therefore request that the draft mandate forms be communicated to this Government for its consideration before their submission to the Council of the League.

The controversy had in the meantime broadened to include the disposition of the island of Yap and the distribution of the cables taken from Germany. In the distribution of the former German cables the United States was again faced by the denial of its equal right with the Principal Allied Powers to participate in determining the consequences of the common victory. In February 1920, the Government of the United States had issued invitations to a conference for the settlement of international questions relating to communications by telegraph, telephone, cable, wireless, etc. On July 9, 1920, the French Government rejected the invitation on the ground that although—

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under the Treaty of Versailles, Germany relinquished her rights to her cables in favor of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers

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inasmuch as the United States, one of the principal Allied and Associated Powers, has not, up to date, ratified the treaty with Germany, the Government of the Republic doubts whether the American Government is in a position to enter upon a useful discussion of that question at the present time.

Nevertheless, on August 18, 1920, the French Government informed Secretary Colby that it would attend the conference.

At the conference, however, the French and British Delegates sought to exclude the United States from an equitable share in the distribution of the former German cables on the ground of an agreement entered into before the United States declared war on Germany.

On November 5, 1920, Secretary Colby wrote:

that the five Principal Allied and Associated Powers have title to the German cables acquired under the treaty is fully admitted. Unanimous consent is essential, not only to a division of ownership in this joint property, but also to the use of it by any one power.

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* Ibid., p. 663, Davis to Colby, August 11, 1920.