

CHAPTER 5

From Palestine to Israel

It is almost impossible to set forth a specific set of events or a given era of historical time as the exact point of origin of a reborn Jewish nationalism. But perhaps the most striking conclusion to be reached from any survey of Jewish history is the prevalence of strong nationalistic feeling among the Jewish masses ever since their dispersion from Palestine in A.D. 70. It was in recognition of this unbroken attachment to an ancestral land that the British government referred to Jewish nationalism as "the oldest nationalist movement in history." *

The idea of a return to Palestine was ever a dominant theme of Jewish life in the diaspora, which term applied to any Jewish community living in exile from Palestine. The whole history of the Jew lies in a demand for political restoration. This helps explain why most Jewish leadership as well as the Jewish masses have persistently rejected schemes such as the British Uganda Plan in 1903 which aimed at resettlement of persecuted Jews in a land other than Palestine. The idea found expression in the past in both successful and abortive attempts to colonize Palestine. It constantly emerged in the form of prayer and poetry and general religious practice.

The method whereby the Jews succeeded in maintaining their identity as a unit throughout the long centuries of their dispersion was a reversal of the usual procedure of making religion a part of national life, for the Jews transformed all the elements of nationalism into religious practice. Thus, by surrounding their nationalism with a halo of sacredness, they succeeded in warding off all attempts to assimilate them culturally or obliterate them physically. It is on this tenacious, unwavering concentration that the nonlegal Jewish claim was based and not alone on the mere existence of a Jewish state in antiquity. It should be added, however, that as early as 1891 a host of experts in international law contended that since

* *Peace Handbook No. 162 on Zionism*, London, 1920.

the Jews never gave up their title to Palestine the "law of dereliction" did not hold in their case.*

Toward the end of the nineteenth century groups of Jews were attempting to extricate Jewish nationalism from the confines of its religious bonds and set it up as an end in itself. Among the groups were a few Hebraists who were themselves the product of a Hebrew cultural renaissance. These men differed from their medieval predecessors in that they undertook the task of establishing a Jewish national movement independent of religion. They secularized and expanded the Hebrew language. They undertook vast research into Jewish history. They glorified Palestine in song, drama, and novel and spoke of it in terms of geography and history rather than religion. In essence, these men were attempting to reverse the medieval trend of Jewish nationalism, which had emphasized the protective bond of religion, and to re-establish a completely independent and secular Jewish nationalism. The one thing both these forms of nationalism had in common was Palestine as the symbol of their vision.

Another major cause of the rebirth of a vital Jewish nationalism was the outbreak of violent anti-Semitism. The wave of anti-Semitic outbursts in Russia in the 1880's, accompanied by further government restrictions upon the Jews, served as a great catalytic agent in popularizing nationalistic ideas. The pogroms crushed all hopes of free Jewish survival even in an enlightened Russia, and spurred the efforts toward the colonization of Palestine. Furthermore, the growing discrimination against the Jews of Eastern Europe for economic reasons, coming as it did on top of a seemingly endless struggle with the Christian church and a generally hostile Gentile community, convinced many others of the inevitability of choosing Zionism as the only remaining path to freedom, social justice, and security.

Colonization of Palestine as the only solution of the Jewish question was advocated quite often in the late eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth centuries by many statesmen and writers, Jew and Gentile. It culminated in the foundation in 1884 in Russia of a society known as Hovevei Zion (Lovers of Zion), whose avowed purpose was to promote Jewish resettlement in Palestine upon a more extensive scale than the isolated new settlements that had already been founded in the two preceding decades. It should be noted here that at no time did the Jewish returnees ever forcefully oust Arabs from their land. The Jewish aim was the restoration of a people in its homeland, and not the establishment of an alien rule

* See, particularly, Dr. William E. Blackstone, "May the United States Intercede for the Jews?" *Our Day*, October, 1891.

over the population and resources of the country. Thus all the land cultivated in both the early and later days of the Zionist movement was purchased from the Arabs either by leading Jewish philanthropists or by a fund set up for that purpose, the Jewish National Fund.

Yet only with the advent in 1896 of Theodore Herzl, an Austrian playwright and man of letters, was the Jewish national sentiment propounded as an idea whose expression should not limit itself to the creation of scattered colonies in the Holy Land, but should expand into an organized endeavor of the Jewish people to work for its national regeneration.

Herzl published his first ideas on the reorganization of the Jews in a pamphlet, *Judenstat* (the Jewish State), in which he advocated the creation of an autonomous Jewish settlement as the solution to the Jewish question. Despite relentless and powerful opposition, Herzl succeeded in bringing together the First Zionist Congress for the purpose of considering his project. It convened at Basel, Switzerland on August 27, 1897, and was attended by delegates from all parts of the world. After much discussion the Congress adopted as the aim of Zionism: "The creation for Jewish people of a publicly and legally assured home in Palestine." To realize this aim, the Zionist Congress proposed the following measures:

1. to promote through effective means the settlement of Palestine by Jewish agricultural and industrial workers;
2. to organize the whole Jewish people by means of local and international institutions suitable for the purpose and conforming with the laws of the countries in which Jews live;
3. to strengthen Jewish national sentiment and consciousness;
4. to take proper steps toward securing the concurrence of the Powers, insofar as their assent might be necessary, for the achievement of the Zionist goal.

Thus Zionism, for the first time in modern history, strode onto the arena of world politics and international diplomacy. Virtually everything that was to unfold in the Zionist movement of later years was already discernible in this first Congress in Basel.

Herzl died in 1904, heartbroken and penniless, without having achieved his purpose. But others took up the cause and the task of colonizing Palestine went on in almost uninterrupted fashion, so that, at the termination of World War I, the Jewish community there numbered some 80,000 in a total population of about 850,000. Over fifty agricultural colonies, with a total of over 100,000 acres, were firmly established as were the beginnings of the Israeli metropolis of the future, Tel Aviv.

The outbreak of World War I brought colonization to a comparative

standstill, but the course of the war led to the issuance, on November 2, 1917, of the Balfour Declaration, a letter from Lord Balfour to Lord Rothschild supporting the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine. The Declaration was hailed by the Zionists of the day as a Magna Carta of future Jewish rights in Palestine (see Doc. 4).

In retrospect, it seems that the promulgation of the Declaration was prompted by at least four major considerations. Firstly, there was a long history of British concern over the fate of European Jewry. For a period of 50 to 75 years prior to World War I there had arisen in England a Christian-sponsored movement favoring the return of the Jews to the Holy Land as the only solution to their chronic woes on the Continent. Secondly, there was the serious military problem posed by the Turkish threat to Suez. A protective bastion had to be erected on the Palestinian coast to help keep open the lifeline to India. Thirdly, the Declaration would draw the enthusiastic support of the masses of Jews in Eastern Europe—a sector facing total capitulation to the German war machine. It would also gain the very important backing of leading American Zionists.

In fact, in his appearance before the Palestine Royal Commission of 1936, Lloyd George testified that the launching of the Declaration at that specific moment was due to “propagandist reasons.” He remarked further that “the Zionist leaders gave us a definite promise that if the Allies committed themselves to giving facilities for the establishment of a national home for the Jews in Palestine, they would do their best to rally Jewish sentiment and support throughout the world to the Allied cause. They kept their word.”

It must be remembered that at the time of the Balfour Declaration there were over 600,000 Jews in the ready-to-collapse Russian army. These men were fighting for a government they hated and whose success in the war they did not anticipate with relish. That the Germans were aware of this is evident in the daily proclamations they dropped over the Russian lines promising that a German victory would bring them true liberty. The following serves as an example:

TO THE JEWS OF POLAND:

The heroic armies of the great mid-European governments, Germany and Austria-Hungary, have entered Poland . . . Our flags bring you rights and freedom; equal citizenship rights, freedom of belief, freedom to work undisturbed in all branches of economic and cultural life in your own spirit . . . Remember Kishinev, Homel, Bialistok and many hundreds of other pogroms! . . . You . . . must rise as one man to aid in the holy cause . . . APPLY WITH THE GREATEST CONFIDENCE TO THE COMMANDANTS

OF OUR MILITARY IN THE PLACES THAT ARE NEAREST TO YOU. HELP BRING THE VICTORY OF FREEDOM AND JUSTICE.*

After the Balfour Declaration was finally issued the German and Turkish governments issued a similar promise which, if anything, was more in line with Zionist aspirations than was the British declaration. But by then the propaganda victory had been snatched from their hands.

A fourth motivating factor behind the release of the Declaration at this time was the British fear of postwar French domination of the entire Mediterranean littoral. The French, through M. Georges Picot, had already insisted that any postwar settlement should place the whole of Syria down to the Egyptian frontier under their control. The British looked upon a Jewish home in Palestine, under their mandate, of course, as an almost heaven-sent means of thwarting the French pretensions. What made the entire scheme even more appealing was the fact that this new fortress on the imperial lifeline would be self-supporting in the sense that it would be built as a Jewish undertaking supported by Jewish financing. Negotiations were undertaken with Jewish leaders headed by Dr. Chaim Weizmann, the emerging leader of the Zionist forces and destined to become the first president of the state of Israel. From the middle of 1916 on, these discussions were carried on in great earnestness and with obvious progress. It should be added for the record that President Woodrow Wilson, an acknowledged champion of the Zionist movement, was constantly consulted and the drafts of the proposed Declaration were submitted to him for approval. That the Arabs, too, were duly informed of the Balfour Declaration is made clear by Lloyd George in his book, *The Truth about the Peace Treaties*. In it he states:

Through Sir Mark Sykes and Colonel Lawrence we informed the Arab leaders, King Hussein and his son, Faisal, of our proposals (regarding the Balfour Declaration). We could not get in touch with the Palestine Arabs as they were fighting against us

The Arab leaders did not offer any objections to the Declaration so long as the rights of the Arabs of Palestine were respected. Pledges were given to the non-Jewish population of Palestine who constituted the great majority of its inhabitants, as well as to the Jews. These were the results of conversations which we had with such Arab leaders as we could get in touch with. There was a two-fold understanding given to them, that the establishment of a Jewish National Home would not in any way, firstly, affect the civil or religious rights of the general population of Palestine; secondly, would not diminish the general prosperity of that population. Those were the only pledges we gave to the Arabs

* William B. Ziff, *The Rape of Palestine*, New York, 1938, pp. 530-531.

A great number of debates were to occur in later years regarding the "true meaning" of the Balfour Declaration, but at the time the Declaration was unqualifiedly endorsed by the Allied powers. Statements of approval came from as far away as China and even the French formally committed themselves "to the renaissance of Jewish Nationality." President Wilson echoed the prevailing sentiment in America when he declared: "The Allied nations, with the fullest concurrence of our own government and people, are agreed that in Palestine shall be laid the foundations of a Jewish Commonwealth." (See Doc. 5 for President Wilson's recommendations on Palestine.) The original favorable attitude of the Arab leaders can best be determined from a joint agreement signed by Dr. Weizmann and Emir Faisal in Paris in 1919 (see Doc. 6).

Later Arab claims that Palestine had been promised to them and not the Jews were based largely on the exchange of letters and negotiations between King Hussein and Sir Henry McMahon, British High Commissioner in Egypt (see Doc. 3). In answer to these claims, Sir Henry himself had this to say in a letter to the *London Times* on July 23, 1947: "I feel it my duty to state, and I do so definitely and emphatically that it was not intended by me in giving this pledge to King Hussein to include Palestine in the area in which Arab independence was promised. I had also every reason to believe at the time that the fact that Palestine was not included in my pledge was well understood by King Hussein." It is no wonder then that in February, 1919, the Zionist Organization submitted a special request to the Allied Supreme Council that, in keeping with the principle that the popular wish of the people involved be honored, the mandate for Palestine be granted to Great Britain. Their wish was granted at San Remo on April 25, 1920. It took another two years, however, before the Mandate, in its final form, was submitted to the League of Nations (see Doc. 7). The delay was occasioned by intervention on the part of the American government which had evinced a great interest in the entire undertaking. The end result of this interest was a "Convention between the United Kingdom and the United States of America" signed on December 3, 1924, which forbade any modification in the terms of the Mandate without American consent. If this was not enough to assure the Zionist leadership that the future held naught but promise, there was in the preamble to the Mandate the specific commitment to translate the Balfour Declaration into practice (see Doc. 7). Thus, when on September 29, 1923, the Palestine Mandate formally came into force the vast majority of those who were interested in the Zionist venture were convinced of its promise of fulfillment. What followed instead was a generation of frus-

tration and bitter disappointment culminating in the British White Paper of 1939 (see Doc. 8). This document completed a cycle for, in effect, it put the British government in the position of denying an independent Jewish state in Palestine. In these days of bitter Arab-Jewish warfare in the Middle East one is prone to forget that by 1939 Britain and not the Arabs had assumed the role of "villainous enemy" as far as the Zionists were concerned

Volumes have been written regarding the record of British rejection of all that was implied in the earlier promises. What lies behind this change in British attitude? There was, first of all, the complete rejection of the ideas made explicit in the Mandate by both the British military in Palestine and, more important, by the British Colonial Office. The latter in particular was convinced that affairs in Palestine should be conducted in the same tradition of imperial rule which characterized the British dominion over India and the rest of the Empire. Since the promise of an independent Jewish state in Palestine stood squarely in the path of such a policy they did all that was in their power to subvert the Zionist goal. In addition, it must be added that even then the British Foreign Office already dreamed of a network of semifeudal Arab states under British hegemony.* Only a successfully independent Jewish state loomed as a threat to this undertaking.

What must be said is that despite every obstacle placed in its way, despite the gradual truncation of Palestine from an area of 45,000 square miles in 1920-1922 to an area of 10,000 square miles in 1922-1948, despite the British restrictions on immigration and economic development, despite the barrage of anti-Zionist White Papers, the Zionist experiment grew ever more successful. Wave after wave of immigrants, legal and illegal, developed oases from desert lands. A new communal form, the Kibbutz, combined Anglo-American political democracy and socialist economics with great success. Self-governing bodies within the framework of the Mandate received the vital experience necessary to the public administration of a modern society. The political parties were as mature and literate as any in the Western World.

The most notable Zionist achievement in this period of trial and stress was the psychological and political transformation of the Jews. The great mass of Jews who migrated to Palestine—by 1939 the figure had reached 500,000—seemed to thrive in the face of the many challenges placed in their path. Gone now was the abject creature of the medieval era whose main hope

* For detailed documentation see. Wilham B Ziff, Paul L. Hanna, and Pierre Van Paassen in Bibliography.

for salvation lay in messianic redemption. Gone, too, was the rootless mass, universally cut off from the soil and normal economic productivity. In its place had emerged a thriving, spirited, and determined people bidding for recognition as equals in the family of nations. It was this rejuvenated Jewish community also which gave the Allies their most reliable locally-derived Middle East fighting contingent during World War II.

The years immediately after the war, 1945-1947, were marked by unprecedented violence in Palestine and continued diplomatic bickering over the question of Palestine's future. The Jewish position could be paraphrased thus: "There is but one refuge for the Jews who survived the terrors of Hitlerism—Palestine. Therefore, the restrictions on immigration must be lifted and we must be allowed to progress along the road to independence. If the British government returns to its promises in the Mandate we shall not press for immediate statehood. If, however, the British remain adamant in their refusal to allow our natural flowering we shall have to establish a Jewish state independent of their wishes."

The Arab reaction to the stated aims of the Zionists can best be gauged from the remarks made by Azzam Pasha, Secretary of the League of Arab States, early in 1946 before an Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry:

Our brother has gone to Europe and to the West and come back something else. He has come back with a totally different conception of things, Western and not Eastern. That doesn't mean that we are necessarily quarreling with anyone who comes from the West. But the Jew, our old cousin, coming back with imperialistic ideas, with materialistic ideas, with reactionary or revolutionary ideas and trying to implement them first by British pressure and then by American pressure, and then by terrorism on his own part—he is not the old cousin and we do not extend to him a very good welcome. The Zionist, the new Jew, wants to dominate and he pretends that he has got a particular civilizing mission with which he returns to a backward, degenerate race in order to put the elements of progress into an area which wants no progress. Well, that has been the pretension of every power that wanted to colonize and aimed at domination. The excuse has always been that the people are backward and that he has got a human mission to put them forward. The Arabs simply stand and say NO. We are not reactionary and we are not backward. Even if we are ignorant, the difference between ignorance and knowledge is ten years in school. We are a living, vitally strong nation, we are in our renaissance, we are producing as many children as any nation in the world. We still have our brains. We have a heritage of civilization and of spiritual life. We are not going to allow ourselves to be controlled either by great nations or small nations or dispersed nations.

When the Anglo-American Committee, appointed by President Truman and British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, recommended that 100,000

Jews be admitted into Palestine as rapidly as possible and that restrictions on sale of land to Jews in Palestine be lifted, the government of Prime Minister Clement Attlee disavowed the report. Hopes of conciliation threatened to evaporate. Underground Jewish forces began an incessant harassing of the British in Palestine which the latter proved incapable of suppressing. Every measure taken by the British, from imprisonment of Palestine's foremost Jewish leaders to severe military countermeasures and the interception and sinking of boats, arriving constantly with "illegal" Jewish refugees, failed to stem the tide of the Jewish uprising. Matters were not at all eased by the additional announcement by the Arab Higher Committee in Palestine that as soon as the Mandate should come to an end an Arab army would drive the Jews out of Palestine. In February of 1947, after several last-ditch attempts at conciliation had failed, Mr. Bevin formally announced that his government had decided to refer the whole problem to the United Nations.

The urgency of the situation dictated immediate action and it was not long in coming. A special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations was called for April 28, 1947, to discuss the Palestine situation. At this session, the Arabs were represented within the United Nations by the states of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia. The Palestinian Arabs, through the Palestine Arab Higher Committee, and the Jews, through the Jewish Agency, pleaded their cases before the Political and Security Committee of the General Assembly. The first bombshell in the proceedings was thrown by the Soviet United Nations delegate, Andrei Gromyko who astounded the Assembly by deserting the former Soviet anti-Zionist position and declaring in favor of a binational state in Palestine. Failing that, he said that the Soviet government would accept partition as a solution to the Palestine problem. On May 15, a Special Committee on Palestine presented its majority report favoring the political partition of Palestine as the only feasible answer to the entire problem. It recommended an economic union between the independent Arab and Jewish states, including a customs union, a joint currency system, joint economic development schemes, joint operation of ports and airports as well as interstate railway, highway, and postal services. The committee further recommended a United Nations trusteeship over Jerusalem and special safeguarding of the Holy Places. It dealt with the Jewish demand for free immigration by proposing the admission of 150,000 Jews during the first two years of transition and an additional 60,000 per year should the transition period go beyond two years. A minority report submitted by

India, Iran, and Yugoslavia recommended a federal state in Palestine akin to binationalism with severely restricted Jewish immigration.

Speaking for the United States, Secretary of State George Marshall approved the majority plan. The Russian government did likewise. The British government rejected both plans. Jewish reaction to the plan was stated by Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, spokesman for the Jewish Agency:

If heavy sacrifice is the inescapable condition of a final solution, if it makes possible the immediate reestablishment of the Jewish State, that ideal for which a people has ceaselessly striven, then the Jewish Agency is prepared to recommend the acceptance of the partition solution. That sacrifice would be the Jewish contribution to the solution of a painful problem and would bear witness to the Jewish people's spirit of international cooperation and its desire for peace.

The following comments typify Arab reaction to the plan.

Mr. Mahmoud Fawzi, the Egyptian representative at the United Nations:

We do not choose to comply with the General Assembly's resolutions on Palestine. The Charter and the United Nations will not fall apart if one more of the General Assembly's resolutions is not put into effect.

Mr. Adil Arslan of Syria:

My country will never recognize such a decision

Dr. Fadhil Jamali, Foreign Minister of Iraq:

Iraq does not recognize the validity of this decision and will reserve freedom of action towards its implementation.

The Partition Plan was introduced at the plenary session of the General Assembly on November 26, 1947, and adopted three days later (see Doc. 10). However, a major flaw in the resolution—the absence of provision for implementing the Partition Plan—led rapidly to an even greater deterioration of the situation. Shortly after the General Assembly session, Great Britain announced that it would terminate the Mandate over Palestine on May 15, 1948. It also insisted that until that date it alone would be responsible for maintaining order in Palestine and would not tolerate United Nations interference in the administration of that land. The Arab League, too, made no secret of its opposition to the implementation of the

Partition Plan. The Arab states and the British government both announced that British arms would continue to be sent to the Middle East in fulfillment of "contractual obligations."

Meanwhile, various elements in the American State Department began to favor a reversal of the American position in Palestine, arguing that United States support of the Jewish state in Palestine would provide an opening wedge for the Soviet Union in the Middle East, and that Arab rulers might cancel American oil concessions as a retributive measure. The growing strength of this viewpoint was reflected in a series of speeches made before the Security Council by the American United Nations delegate, Warren R. Austin. On March 19, 1948, Ambassador Austin made explicit the reversal of the American position in the following proposals submitted to the United Nations:

1. The plan proposed by the General Assembly is an integral plan which cannot succeed unless each of its parts can be carried out. There seems to be general agreement that the plan cannot now be implemented by peaceful means.

2. We believe that further steps must be taken immediately not only to maintain the peace but also to afford a further opportunity to reach an agreement between the interested parties regarding the future government of Palestine. To this end we believe that a temporary trusteeship for Palestine should be established under the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations. Such a United Nations trusteeship would be without prejudice to the rights, claims, or position of the parties concerned or to the character of the eventual political settlement, which we hope can be achieved without long delay. In our opinion, the Security Council should recommend the establishment of such a trusteeship to the General Assembly and to the mandatory power. This would require an immediate special session of the General Assembly, which the Security Council should request the Secretary General to convoke under Article 20 of the Charter.

3. Pending the meeting of the proposed special session of the General Assembly, we believe that the Security Council should instruct the Palestine Commission to suspend its efforts to implement the proposed partition plan.

In America, Mr. Austin's statement elicited an extraordinarily vocal negative public opinion. In the United Nations Mr. Gromyko blamed the United States for the breakdown in the attempts to solve the Palestine problem. England readily announced its support of the American stand. In Palestine, organized anti-British military and terroristic measures were renewed on a large scale. Conditions became such that Trygve Lie, United Nations Secretary General, was obliged to call into being another special General Assembly session on Palestine. The Assembly convened

on April 16, 1948. The American delegation to the special session submitted a series of proposals recommending a temporary trusteeship over Palestine, pending Arab-Jewish agreement on a future government; a restriction upon Jewish immigration and land purchase (pending such agreement); and election of a legislature (which would necessarily have an Arab majority). The Soviet Union countered by demanding, as under the United Nations Charter it had the right to do, a seat on any trusteeship over Palestine.

So matters stood on the afternoon of Monday, May 14, 1948. At 5:00 P.M. that day the final plenary session of the special session was scheduled to convene. At exactly 4:06 P.M. the state of Israel declared its independence.

The Arab World reacted swiftly. On May 15, the regular armies of Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon invaded Israel. Their purpose as stated by Azzam Pasha, Secretary General of the Arab League, was clear: "There will be a war of extermination and a momentous massacre which will be spoken of like the Mongolian massacres and the Crusades." One week after the beginning of hostilities, the Security Council issued the first of several cease-fire orders which were accepted by Israel and rejected by the Arabs. The weeks and months that followed were marked by the establishment and abandonment of several truces. They were also marked by a series of surprisingly conclusive Israeli military successes. After eight months of heavy fighting the military phase of the war came to an end with the crushing defeat of the Egyptian armies which had invaded southern Israel.

During the months of February, March, April, and July, armistice agreements were reached between Israel and her Arab neighbors. (See Doc. 11. for Egyptian-Israeli armistice agreement.) To date, no further progress has been made toward permanent treaties of peace. By October of the same year it had become apparent that the Arab nations were already arming for a "second round." Thus Mohammed Saleh El-din Bey, a leading Egyptian statesman and former foreign minister, declared, "The Arabs intend to annihilate the state of Israel." This cry for revenge remained consistent in the Arab countries.

April 14, 1950, Akram Hourani, the Defense Minister of Syria, declared:

The Syrian army is ready to take revenge for the shame of the defeat in Palestine. We call on Arab countries to unite towards the national war, the battle of revenge.

June 17, 1951, Azzam Pasha, Secretary General of the Arab League, announced:

The United Nations will not solve the Palestine problem but only the Arabs themselves can do it. They are now getting ready and preparing to take back Palestine . . . the day is not far

April 24, 1952, Faris El Khouri, chief Syrian delegate to the United Nations, stated:

The only way open to the Arabs to achieve a solution of the Palestine problem is the way of force

January 9, 1953, King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia declared:

Israel to the Arab World is like a cancer to the human body and the only remedy is to uproot it just like a cancer.

May 8, 1954, Colonel Nasser had this to say:

Israel is an artificial state which must disappear.

And on October 14, 1955, Colonel Nasser added:

There is no sense in talking about peace with Israel. There isn't even the smallest place for negotiations between the Arabs and Israel

April 11, 1956, the Egyptian government-controlled newspaper *Al Gom-houria* remarked:

The only reasonable proposal which Mr Hammarskjold can make is the obliteration of Israel from the face of the earth.

These expressions of Arab intent, coupled with their categorical refusal to translate the uneasy armistice terms into a permanent peace, were among the major causes of unabated friction in the area. Among other factors which exacerbated the situation were:

1. The unending series of raids and counterraids along every Arab-Israeli borderline. The United Nations Security Council has chastised both Israel and the Arab states on her border for constantly violating the armistice agreements. The United Nation and world public opinion were partic-

ularly disturbed over several major retaliatory raids conducted by Israel against Egypt and Syria.

2. The dispute over boundaries. The Arabs have demanded that Israel return to the boundary lines set by the Partition Plan of 1947. Israel has refused to consider any major boundary revisions claiming that to do so would dishonor those who died defending the present boundaries against aggression.

3. The dispute over water rights. There has been particular bitterness over harnessing the waters of the Jordan River.

4. Free passage in the Suez Canal. Nothing ever came of a Security Council order calling upon Egypt to end its blockade of Israel by opening the canal to Israeli shipping.

5. The status of Jerusalem.

6. The Arab refugees.

With the possible exception of the border clashes, no single issue in the Middle East prior to the Suez War aroused as much public interest as the problem of the Arab refugees. It is generally agreed that this is one of the important obstacles to peaceful settlement of Arab-Israeli differences. The problem has its origin in the mass Arab exodus from Palestine which began shortly after the United Nations Partitions Resolution was announced and which continued through the early phases of the Arab-Israeli War of 1948-1949. The number of Arabs who left Palestine has been estimated as anywhere between 550,000 and 750,000.

Today there are over 900,000 Arab refugees living in several Middle Eastern lands under the most miserable conditions imaginable. The bulk of them, some 500,000, are in Jordan; the remainder, with approximation as to totals, are dispersed as follows: Lebanon, 120,000; Syria, 90,000; Iraq, 5,000; Gaza 220,000; and a sprinkling in Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

The Arabs have insisted that Israel repatriate all those who wish to return and compensate the others for their properties. The Arabs have argued that Israel could settle many of these refugees in the territory it acquired during the Palestine War beyond the original Palestine boundaries.

When Israel declared its independence, the new nation was established within the boundaries set by the United Nations in its 1947 Partition Plan. Under the terms of that proposal an area of 5,670 square miles of the former territory of Palestine was to be set up as an independent Jewish state. The present territory of Israel—8,048 square miles—consists of that original territory plus 2,378 square miles acquired in the war waged against the Arab states in 1948-1949. As a result of the same war

Jordan acquired 2,222 square miles and Egypt assumed control of the 135 square miles which comprise the Gaza Strip.

The Gaza Strip is a narrow rectangular piece of land some six miles in width extending north of the Egyptian frontier for approximately 26 miles along the Mediterranean coast and includes the town of Gaza. Its military importance can be gauged by the fact that it is within 35 miles of Tel Aviv. The resident population is about 90,000. The additional 200,000 Arab refugees who have encamped within the narrow confines of the strip are almost entirely dependent upon the United Nations Relief and Works Administration and other international relief agencies. Though Egyptian representatives at the United Nations often referred to the Gaza Strip as "Egyptian controlled territory," Egypt never actually annexed the Gaza Strip. It was treated as occupied territory provisionally administered by the Egyptian military authorities. Thus, in September, 1955, the Cairo Court of Administrative Jurisdiction stated that the Gaza Strip was outside Egyptian territory and that the Egyptian authorities were exercising "a kind of control over part of the territory of Palestine."

Israel has argued that the mass resettlement of obviously hostile Arabs would be tantamount to inviting a "fifth column" more than half the size of its own population. The Israelis also point out that the "refugee problem" is a two-sided affair since Israel has had to absorb, in addition to the masses of East European Jews, some 400,000 Jewish refugees who have been forced to emigrate in recent years from Egypt, Yemen, Syria, Iraq, and other Arab lands. Israel, as has already been noted, is adamant in its refusal to make any but minor boundary adjustments and consistently points to the fact that Jordan, too, acquired some 2,200 square miles of additional land as a result of the same Palestine War.

In 1948, Israel offered to accept 100,000 returning Arab refugees as part of a general peace settlement but, in the absence of such a settlement, has withdrawn the offer. The Israel government has, however, absorbed some 30,000 illegal Arab immigrants who infiltrated across the border, and has released most of the \$12 million in frozen bank accounts belonging to Arab refugees. The feeling nevertheless persists within the councils of the United Nations and elsewhere that, all its arguments to the contrary notwithstanding, Israel's attitude toward the Arab refugee has been far too rigid.

The United Nations position can be summarized as a shift from the view that a compromise was possible between repatriation and resettle-

ment, to a view in which the emphasis has shifted to resettlement in the Arab World.

Despite the numerous points of friction many people still believe that an eventual peace settlement might have been possible were it not for the dramatic suddenness with which Egypt emerged as a close collaborator with—if not ally of—the Soviet Union. The turning point in this history can be dated as September 27, 1955. At that time Egypt consummated an arms deal with Czechoslovakia estimated at over \$250 million, which resulted in its assuming the role of a much more powerful leader of an Arab military entente. It is to the details surrounding the development of this “new Egypt” that we now turn.