Monographs Series No. 7

THE BALFOUR DECLARATION

by J. M. N. Jeffries

THE INSTITUTE FOR PALESTINE STUDIES
BEIRUT, 1967

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The Balfour Declaration

BY

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Published on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Balfour Declaration

THE INSTITUTE FOR PALESTINE STUDIES
Haddad Bldg., Chile St. (Off Verdun), Beirut, Lebanon
1967

INTRODUCTION

Fifty years ago on November 2nd 1917 Britain's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. A. J. Balfour addressed a letter to the Anglo-Jewish leader Baron Lionel Walter Rothschild as follows:

"I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government the following declaration of sympathy which has been submitted to and approved by the Cabinet:-

> "His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

This letter (later known as the Balfour Declaration) was sent to Baron Rothschild after the Arabs had already declared themselves on Britain's side in the war and while they were actually fighting as allies of the Western powers against Germany and the Ottoman Empire.

Britain's motives in making the Declaration were complex, but chief among them was the desire to maintain a firm grip on the strategic area of Palestine through the sponsorship of Zionism, in the apparent belief that the Zionists would remain dependent on herself. The actual timing of the Declaration was, however, due to psychological warfare considerations, though, of course, the Declaration was kept secret from the Arabs of Palestine until after the war had ended.

Until the Balfour Declaration in 1917 the Zionists had met with little success among Jews and in Palestine: A tiny minority of Jews, they faced the fierce opposition of integrationist, Orthodox and socialist Jews alike. Zionist funds were meagre, Zionist agricultural settlement in Palestine a failure (after more than 30 years of "pioneering" only 3000 Jews were agriculturalists in Palestine in 1914); and, above all, Palestine Arab resistance to Zionism had already crystallized

and the Ottoman administration of the country had passed legislation against Jewish immigration and the transfer of land to Jews.

The Balfour Declaration revolutionized the position of the Zionist Organization vis-à-vis the Arabs of Palestine and the non-Zionist majority of the Jews of the world. It gave the Organization the formidable backing not only of a great power but of a power who was also paramount in the Near East. It was under the protective umbrella of this power which lasted for 30 years that the Zionist infrastructure was laid in Palestine and Zionism launched on its career of expansion and aggrandizement in the Arab Orient.

The essay here printed is Chapter Eleven of the book entitled *Palestine: the Reality* (Longmans, Green and Co.,1939)by the late J.M.N. Jeffries. The Institute for Palestine Studies considers it appropriate to republish this chapter of Mr. Jeffries' classic work on the Palestine Problem on the fiftieth anniversary of the Balfour Declaration. The sad story of tribulations and catastrophes brought about in the wake of this Declaration makes Mr. Jeffries' analysis all the more enduringly valid today.

Beirut, November 2, 1967

THERE is a great deal which has to be said now concerning the Declaration which, like water seeking its source, came to the Zionist leaders on that 2nd of November in 1917. But the first thing of all to be said of the Balfour Declaration is that it was a pronouncement which was weighed to the last pennyweight before it was issued. There are but sixty-seven words in it, and each of these, save perhaps the Government's title and a few innocent conjunctions, was considered at length before it was passed into the text.

This too memorable document is not so much a sentence of English as a verbal mosaic. Drafts for it travelled back and forth, within England or over the Ocean, to be scrutinized by some two score draftsmen half co-operating, half competing with one another, who erased phrase or adopted that after much thought. At long last, out of the store of their rejections and of their acceptances the final miscellany was chosen, ratified and fixed. There never has been a proclamation prepared, more carefully produced, more consciously worded.

Commentators of all views agree upon this. In his *Zionism* Mr. Leonard Stein says, "The Balfour Declaration was by no means a casual gesture. It was issued after prolonged deliberations as a considered statement of policy." In Temperley's *History of the Peace Conference of Paris*, it is stated that "before the British Government gave the Declaration to the world, it had been closely examined in all its bearings and implications, and subjected to repeated change and amendment." M. Nahum Sokolov, in his *History of Zionism*, another fundamental work, writes that "every idea born in London was tested by the Zionist Organization in America, and every suggestion in America received the most careful attention in London." "The Balfour Declaration was in process of making for nearly two years, writes Mr. Wise, who indeed was in a position to know. "Its authorship

was not solitary but collective." Mr. Lloyd George himself, speaking in Wales in 1930, assured his hearers, in curious terms, that the Declaration "was prepared after much consideration, not merely of its policy but of its actual wording."

So there is one point upon which there is no doubt. Whatever is to be found in the Balfour Declaration was put into it deliberately. There are no accidents in that text. If there is any vagueness in it this is an intentional vagueness. If it is vague, the admiral is vague who orders his destroyers to emit a smoke-screen.

It is most important to have this established before more is said, for the reason that for some time past the controversy concerning Palestine, in so far as the Declaration is concerned, has been given a false turn. A secondary apologia has been evolved, which by-passes the *bona fides* of Lord Balfour's pronouncement to concentrate upon its terminology. It is described as "uncertainly phrased," or as "containing implications not foreseen when it was written," or as "not so definite as was thought"; or contrariwise it is said that "too much has been read into it."

Behind this apologia often enough there may have lain a good intention. The Balfour Declaration, alas! has been made by a series of our Governments the pedestal of British policy in Palestine. Because of this a number of persons have reasoned that the Declaration must be accepted as it stands, "with all its imperfections." Scrutiny of it might reveal that it was written in bad faith. But to expose bad faith in the Declaration would be the same as exposing it in the conduct of the country itself, since one Government of Great Britain published it and subsequent Governments have confirmed it. The people who have shrunk from scrutinizing it may not have put their thoughts to themselves as starkly as that, but it was thus they did think in their heart's recesses. Therefore, as they conceived, the only course which lay open to them, if the country's honour was to be saved, was to assume that the Declaration had been loosely composed and to lead the controversy on to that ground. They made great show of riddling out what it meant, with a little deprecatory criticism thrown in.

In this way they could escape perhaps having to acknowledge that this nationally issued and nationally endorsed document was nothing but a calmly planned piece of deception. That is why for years past we have heard statesmen, publicists and politicians, and members of the public too, assert that the authors of the Declaration either did not mean what they appear to say in it, or did not succeed

in saying in it what they meant. Other apologists have given their own interested versions of its meaning. In this order were the explanations of Mr. Winston Churchill, as intricate and as lasting as worm-casts in the sand.

Behind excuses and shifts of the kind there may lie, in this way, something of good intention. But it is an intention deplorably translated into practice, and I am not going to follow the example thus set. Since the Balfour Declaration was without excuse, I see no reason to excuse it . There is no pleasure in taking such a course (as I have said before now): there is no relish in exposing one's country or in exposing at least the men who spoke in her name. But the world of 1939 has no room for displays of patriotic cowardice. Nor is there any sort of advantage in them. We want an England which can confess her sins, and thereafter take her place at the head of the nations in the strength of her cleared conscience.

With this borne in mind, let us return to the Declaration. It reached the general public on the 9th of November, when Lord Balfour's letter was reproduced in the newspapers. It was given forth, of course, under the guise of an entirely British communication embodying an entirely British conception. Everyone concerned was made the victim of this false pretence. The British people were given to believe that it was an unadulterated product of their own Government. To the mass of Jews it was presented as a guarantee sprung of nothing but the conscience of the Cabinet—and thereby it served to allure them towards political Zionism. As for the Arabs, when it was proclaimed eventually upon their soil (which was not till much later), to them too a text in which Zionists of all nationalities had collaborated was announced as the voice of Britain. They were told that it was a pledge made to the Zionists: they were not told that the Zionists had written most of it. They were asked to respect it on the ground that it was given to the world by the British Government out of its native magnanimity, after the said Government had extended its profound, solitary and single-minded consideration to the "problem of Palestine."

Let me be quite clear about this. The onus of deception does not lie upon the Government of 1917 because before issuing its Declaration *it consulted* the Zionists. As far as the mere form of the proposed pronouncement went (leaving aside other consideration), the Zionists could have been asked quite reasonably to submit their ideas upon the species of "support and encouragement" for which they hoped. The Government could have examined whatever the Zionists submit-

ted, and have consulted further with them, till both had agreed upon a final text. Had this text been published for what it was, an agreement between the two parties which the British Government was willing to sponsor, then the form of the Declaration would have been blameless. The form would have been honest, even if the policy was indefensible.

When however the bipartite Declaration—and to call it bipartite even is to swell the Governmental share in its drafting—was given out as the composition of His Majesty's Government alone, a plain deception was committed. In subsequent years too these synthetic *ipsissima verba* have been paraded with unyielding obstinacy to the Arabs as a sacred obligation of Great Britain to the Jews, even after it had been disclosed that all the time various Zionists had themselves framed the obligation to themselves. This makes later Governments partakers in the deception of the 1917 Cabinet, a deception only mitigated by culpable ignorance in the case of certain members of these Governments.

The Zionists themselves are in a better position in the matter than their British collaborators are. To do them justice, it was they who made known the real conditions under which the Declaration was composed. They did so after an interval which I cannot give exactly, since I have not read all Zionist publications and writings that ever were. But the Zionist Organization certainly had divulged its share in the Declaration within four years of its publication, and for all I know this may have been divulged earlier. I shall not say that the motives of the Zionist Organization were of the first rank. Everything seemed to be going swimmingly for their cause then and some members or other of the Organization staff could not resist gathering kudos in the eyes of the mass of Zionist supporters by disclosing the important part which their body behind the scenes had taken in the Declaration. Still, their statement was a frank one.

And now to analyse the text of the Declaration. "*His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people . . .* " This first clause is often printed with the words "national home" with capital initials. But in the original copy, as reproduced in *The Times*, Lord Balfour used the discreeter apparel of what printers call "lower-case" letters for his protégé. Neither he nor his colleagues can claim the invention of this title, which has been imagined by Leon Pinsker in Odessa thirty-five years before. Pinsker himself did not intend it to apply to Palestine. He said, " We must not attach ourselves to the place where our political life was

once violently interrupted" (Stein), though he did his best to establish colonies there as elsewhere. But Balfour and his colleagues adopted the title from the Zionist programmes and drafts, and made use of its ambiguity. For most people in 1917 "National Home," with or without capitals, was a new phrase. Naturally no one could give it a meaning, for it had no established meaning, and was put into practice in Palestine without one.

But in a formal document announcing the support of the British Government for this institution, it was indicated by all rules of statesmanship that ere committing itself to such support, the Government should define for the nation what exactly it was supporting. Not to do so was to pledge (without touching on the right to give a pledge) the aid of Great Britain for no one could say what. The same culpable lack of definition was to be found in the preamble, wherein the Declaration was described as "a declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations," but no clue was supplied of these desires. What were Jewish Zionist aspirations? They were not identified. How could a British Government guarantee its sympathy to an enigma?

The truth of course is that these unfathomable phrases were employed just because they were unfathomable and could be interpreted to pleasure. They had the air of promising Government support of what the Zionists wanted in Palestine, a Jewish State, to be reached through a fictitious condominium of Jew and Arab. This was the meaning which the Zionists who helped to draw up the Declaration accepted in the end, and this was the meaning Zionists and Jews in general were given to understand the Declaration would hold. They were disappointed no doubt that they did not receive full ruling rights immediately. But they were confident that they could engender conditions in Palestine involving a more rapid finish for the transition period than might be expected. The Government on its part did mean to give as much of the Zionists' sense to the Declaration as was safe, from the very start. As the margin of safety grew, as its own hold on the land became stronger, as a menial prosperity enticed the mass of Arabs, and the opposition of the remainder had been measured and met, then the Government would increase its support of the Zionist establishment in widening degrees, till the Jewish State at last arose.

On the other hand, the Government kept a way of retreat open in case some formidable opposition, in Britain or outside, might make headway against official alliance with political Zionism. In that event, the Declaration was phrased so that it could be explained away as

nothing but an expression of unengaged, friendly interest in the Zionist movement. If it came to that, what *did* "view with favour" amount to as a gage of support? Pretty little. It could be taken to signify no more than that the Government would cast a benign eye upon the "national home," pleased if the Zionist plans worked out, regretful but quite unimplicated if they failed.

To sum up: the paths of the Government and of Zionism had crossed: the Government had liked the wanderer's look: the pair had dallied, and then they had agreed to walk on together. So far so good. But if trouble arose on the way before home was reached, well, the path which the Government had crossed the Government, in a manner of speaking, could cross again. The final drafting of the Declaration was a great play of wits, in fact. The opposition to the previous drafts had brought it home to the Government that it must be more careful. So in the final draft, while still conceding everything to the Zionists in its own intent, the Government achieved a wording which would allow it an exit, if needs were, from any definite obligation of any kind. In this the Governmental drafters outwitted the Zionist drafters, who thought that they had the Government securely tied up. The Government was anxious for these ties, which it had invited, but it preferred now to draft so that even they could be slipped in the last resort. All first-class chicanery, but how far fitting in a Declaration by Great Britain is another matter.

In the succeeding clause the same dubious skilfulness prevails in the first. The Government " *will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object.*" What is to be understood of this facilitation? To "facilitate" may signify to lend a hand, actively, but also it may just as well signify to put no hand in the way, passively. The sentence in fact is composed upon the same lines as its predecessor, that is, it covers the private intention of giving active help, provides a public screen of passive interest, and in the last resort contains a way out. As in the preceding sentence the situation of the Zionist drafters was that they considered that the nucleus of their special intentions was contained in the words used.

However, it is not till we reach the third and final clause of the Balfour Declaration that its character is quite revealed. " . . . *it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.*"

The first part of this clause is the supposed "safeguard" of the

Arabs of Palestine, which protects them from Zionist encroachment. As far as protection goes, I am reminded of the experience of a relative. When about to land from a ship in a lonely corner of some docks in a distant country, he was warned to take very little money with him and, above all, "to beware of the police." A similar warning applies to this "protective" clause.

At first sight it does not seem so craftily phrased as the earlier clauses. The will-to-deceive in it is so patent; the description of the Arabs as the "non-Jewish communities in Palestine" is so obviously slippery. At the time the Declaration was issued the population of Palestine was in the neighbourhood of 670,000. Of these the Jews numbered some 60,000. These are broad figures, but reasonable: there is no accurate census to quote: in an interin report to the League of Nations drawn up by the military administration the Jewish total was put at 55,000; in a note of the 1920 Government it was put at 65,000.

Deductions can be made from the pre-War Jewish population. Estimates of this vary from the caution of the official *Shaw Report*, which says it must have been at least 60,000, to the futuristic 100,000 of Mr. Bentwich. Mr. Stein says well over 80,000, and quotes Ruppin's 1916 estimate of nearly 85,000. Accepting this last estimate, and allowing for a fall of 25,000 during the War, which tallies with the figures of those lost by death or exile (Arab wartime losses being infinitely greater actually and proportionately), a 60,000 total for 1918–19 is a fair assumption.

Therefore we have Palestine with 91 per cent of its people Arab and 9 per cent Jew at the time of the Declaration. It was an Arab population with a dash of Jew. Half of the Jews were recent arrivals.

Before this unpalatable reality, what did the framers of the Balfour do? By an altogether abject subterfuge, under colour of protecting Arab interests, they set out to conceal the fact that the Arabs to all intents constituted the population of the country. It called them the "non-Jewish communities in Palestine"! It called the multitude the non-few; it called the 670,000 the non-60,000; out of a hundred it called the 91 the non-9. You might just as well call the British people "the non-Continental communities in Great Britain." It would be as suitable to define the mass of working men as "the non-idling communities in the world," or the healthy as the "non-bedridden elements amongst sleepers," or the sane as "the non-lunatic section of thinkers" —or the grass of the countryside as "the non-dandelion portion of the

pastures."

But of course there is more than mere preposterous nomenclature in the use of the phrase "non-Jewish communities in Palestine" to describe the Arabs. It is fraudulent. It was done in order to conceal the true ratio between Arabs and Jews, and thereby to make easier the supersession of the former. It was as though in some declaration Highlanders and Lowlanders had been defined as "the existing non-Irish communities in Scotland" in order that the Irish colonies might be deemed the essential elements of the population north of the Tweed. The Scots themselves thus would appear to be nothing but sporadic groups dotted about the Caledonian soil. Upon which, dispossessive action against the Scots could be attempted more easily. It was a pity indeed that Lord Balfour was not forced to try in Scotland what he and his Zionist friends carried through in Palestine: one airily disingenuous statesman the less would have been left in power.

Just now it was stated that at first sight this phrase seemed not so crafty, because it was too manifestly deceitful. But on second examination it is perceived to be adroit in its mean way. It plays upon general ignorance. What in 1917 did the war-worn British public, what did the deluded Jews of Russia, what did any general body of people outside the Near East know about the composition of the population of Palestine? Nothing.

It was upon this, then, that the drafters of the Declaration played. They concealed the Arabs's very name and called them "existing communities in Palestine," as though they were packets of monks who had stayed into the country and here and there had got a foothold in it. The qualification "existing" provides the finishing touch. The impression given is that these Arabs have just managed to survive, that an explorer has returned and reported to Lord Balfour that he has discovered non-Jews existing in the hills.

Consequently the average citizen, when he read the Declaration, concluded, if he gave the matter any further thought at all, that proper steps would be taken under its terms to safeguard the occasional remnants of other races than the Jews who might be found in the Holy Land. This was what it was intended he should conclude. As for any odd individuals who in the thick of war might have sufficient interest to question the phraseology employed, for them what may have been thought a neat reply had been prepared. "Community is the correct word to use since the population of Palestine is divided into the Moslem, Christian and Jewish communities." The Druses and Sa-

maritans might have been added for effect: otherwise there is no more to say about this equivocation. It is enough to write it down to expose it. Words are wasted on it.

But the Declaration was not issued merely to falsify the status of the Arabs. It was also to offer them a spurious guarantee, in the phrase "*it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which shall prejudice the civil and religious rights*" of the aforesaid so-called "communities." That their religious rights should not be prejudiced, indeed, was satisfactory, though there was not very much in that. Happily, it could be taken for granted. Wherever Britain rules religious rights are preserved.

The crux arrives with "civil rights". What are "civil rights"? All turns on this point. If civil rights remain undefined it is only a mockery to guarantee them. To guarantee anything, and at the same time not to let anyone know what it is, that is *Alice in Wonderland* legislation. "I guarantee your civil rights," said the White Queen to Alice in Palestine-land. "Oh, thank you!" said Alice, "what are they, please?" "I'm sure I can't tell you, my dear," said the White Queen, "but I'll guarantee very hard."

If only the Declaration had been as innocent as the text of *Alice in Wonderland.* Its nonsense is deceptive nonsense, written with vicious intention. The Arabs were guaranteed civil rights, again because to the unalert ear it sounded as though they were being assured a man's normal rights, the freedom to choose the government of his country which every decent man should enjoy, the common political rights of a democratic regime.

But in fact the Arabs were not assured these at all. The effect, and the aim, of the clause actually was to withdraw from the Arabs (fighting or suffering for us at the time under promise of independence) those very rights of independence for which they had contracted; to say nothing of their natural title to them. By sleight of tongue civil rights were substituted for political rights. If civil rights meant anything, which was uncertain and would take long legal proof (which was never offered) they meant most likely civic or borough rights, or such rights as a foreign householder can exercise in a country of which he is not a citizen. But this was untested theory. As practice went, "civil rights" was an expression which was left without any interpretation, and so had no existence as a surety or guarantee at all.

When in Jerusalem, once I asked a High Commissioner himself

what were civil rights, and the answer of the High Commissioner was that "Well, they would be very difficult to define." Which is precisely why they were guaranteed to the Arabs. It was a triumph of draftsmanship, of course, to take everything away from them in terms which appeared to safeguard them. A skilful ruse of the drafters, if a knavish one.

There can be no doubt that the authors of this particular "guarantee" were the Zionists themselves, and that the phrase was introduced from America. The clause "it being clearly understood" and what follows has enough of a turn of its own to arouse attention. It is not automatic phraseology: it is no oft-employed cliché. If it were to be found in some previous document relating to the question, then obviously it was transferred from there into the Balfour Declaration.

It is so to be found, and it was transferred. When the September version of the Declaration was dropped because of the Magnus-Montagu opposition, the Cabinet or the Zionist camarilla in it gave its own attention to finding a substitute. But this attention, as before, consisted largely in picking and choosing admist the Zionists' suggestions. Baulked of the open mastership of Palestine which the September version would have given them, and driven to pay lip-homage to the Arabs, the Zionists, on one side of the Atlantic or the other, evidently offered a suitable formula drawn from the manifesto of the Jewish organizations of the United States, of the 2nd of October, 1916, a year or so before.

In this manifesto the said organizations, *inter alia*, had demanded full rights for the Jews wherever they lived. The manifesto went on to define these, and the definition was thus worded: "it being understood that the phrase 'full rights' is deemed to include civil, religious and political rights."

There most certainly is the source, the rough copy of the celebrated Balfour guarantee. The identity of words is not to be dismissed as a mere coincidence. The juxtaposition of "it being understood that" and of the table of rights which follows points unmistakably to reproduction.

Observe, though, what a difference occurred in the new use of the formula. In the United States the Zionist drafters had employed the formula to define their own rights. In the Balfour Declaration they had to employ it to define, for safeguarding purposes, their own rights, but also, so to speak, to undefine the Arabs' rights. They conceded therefore to the Arabs the notorious "civil rights": for themselves they

dropped this word "civil" altogether. They had seen from the beginning that it had no value, since the manifesto they had taken care to demand religious and political rights *in addition* to civil rights. In the Balfour Declaration they took the same care.

But they improved the phraseology in the "Balfour Declaration." Not only was "civil " jettisoned, but with great agility the cardinal word "political" was shuffled from "rights" on to "status." To have granted in the same clause only civil rights to the Arabs but to the Jews political rights would have been too glaring a contrast. It might have drawn attention even from the indifferent eyes of 1917. Therefore, for the Jews their "rights" were left apparently unclarified but really expanded in principle through the removal of the constricting adjective while" political status" was brought in as something of another order peculiar to the Jews, and to do the work of a definite guarantee.

Let me halt for a space to explain why it was essential to have such a guarantee. Without it when Palestine became a Jewish State all Jews might be conceived as belonging to it. This might occur even during the preliminary stage, during the illusory period when Jew and Arab running in harness were building up a new Palestine together (or whatever mixed metaphor best describes this atrocious mixed metaphor of policy). Antisemitism spreads easily, and an agitation might arise in any country to dispatch Jewish citizens to Palestine, or if not to expel them, to catalogue them as aliens, citizens of Palestine, and to deprive them of the vote.

The insertion of the guarantee is further proof, besides, of the character of the regime intended under the Declaration in the Holy Land. If the "National Home" was to be something innocuous, a mere "national home from home" with a modicum of establishment receiving a stream of visitors, an institution without any political status, then there was no need to guarantee hosts or guests against losing their overseas or overland political status in their place of origin. If "National Home" meant a State or quasi-State, there was every need for the guarantee.

The "guarantee" clause of the Declaration, then, with its deceptive text by which the Arabs were to be deprived of their citizenship, sprang undoubtedly from Zionist brains, though it was adopted of course by Balfour and the others and issued by him as though the British Cabinet had thought it out. Considering the joint authorship of the Declaration, this perhaps might have been expected. Its British drafters were mostly guided by expediency: the Zionist drafters were

doctrinaires. The British thought it necessary to shut their eyes to Arab rights; the Zionists were convinced or convinced themselves that the Arabs had no rights as men, save those the Turks might have conceded them.

Mr. de Haas, the American drafter, proclaims their attitude very clearly. "We draw a distinction," says he, "between Jewish rights and Arab claims. Whether the Palestinian population in 1914 possessed any tangible political rights is for those versed in Turkish law to say. In practice we know that such rights did not exist, even though the young Turks had created a paper Parliament. Djemaal Pasha ruled in Palestine with an iron hand, as every Turk had done before him, though he too may have indulged (*sic*) the people in paper rights. The term '*Political rights*' (Mr. de Haas' own capital and italics) does not appear in the Balfour Declaration. The phrase used is civil rights, and as we have made abundantly clear every word of that document was weighed by more than a score of authorities."

From one of the principal drafters of the Declaration, who scissored its terms, this statement clinches the matter. Under the Declaration the Arabs were to get no political rights, whether they had them in principle or not. According to the Zionists' thesis, of which Mr. de Haas is such a notable exponent, they did not hold any in practice and it was very unlikely that they held any in theory.

A couple of pages later in his work, Mr. de Haas has the air of recoiling momentarily from this thesis, or else of having forgotten in the heat of writing that he had just developed it. He says, in passing, of the Arab case, "The Arab case, apart from the rights which inhere from living in a country . . . " But having mentioned this natural dower thus fugitively he does not allude to it again.

Mr. de Haas is not alone in this attitude, nor is it the attitude alone of the Zionists of the United States. The same point of view prevails amidst British Zionists: it must so prevail, since to recognize that the Arabs have political rights is to recognize that the "National Home" cannot be imposed upon them. As an example of British Zionist opinion I may quote from Mr. Herbert Sidebotham, amongst-Gentiles the most assiduous apologist of the cause. His role in Manchester has been mentioned already. He is an absolute apostle of Zionism, and I think he might be described not too maliciously as the inside-out Paul of the movement.

It is very significant to see the effect which his gospel has upon him. Here is a man, very properly admired by his colleagues in journa-

lism, and to be read with respect when he comments on other topics. But when he turns to the defence of Zionism and starts to justify its behaviour, he propounds the most extravagant theories as though they were founded in reason and matured in experience. This is no unusual phenomenon. A blind spot of madness seems to form in the outlook of everyone who succumbs to the Zionist germ.

Mr. Sidebotham differs from Mr. de Haas in that he concentrates on the status of Palestine rather than on the status of its inhabitants. But he reaches a similar result. He deprives the Arabs of any birthright. I quote from a memorandum of his, somewhat hurriedly entitled *British Policy and the Palestine Mandate: Our Proud Privilege.* This begins " We are in Palestine by a conjunction, made by the accidents of war and not designed, between the oldest national idea in the world's history and *certain political and moral interests peculiar to Great Britain.*" (I cannot refrain from italicizing the final phrase. Could anyone?)

At the close of his first chapter Mr. Sidebotham writes: "Palestine, in fact, had no separate national or geographic existence apart from that which the classic history of the Jews had given it, and this disappeared with Jewish independence. In assigning Palestine therefore as a national home, Mr. Balfour was not giving away anything that belonged to some-one else. It was a ghost of the past which two thousand years had not succeeded in laying and which could assume an actual physical existence only through the Jews. To the Christian Palestine was the Holy Land .... To others Palestine might indifferently be regarded as an appendage of Egypt or a part of Syria or Arabia. Only to Jews could Palestine be a country by itself ...." Or again, "Palestine as a country did not exist before the Balfour promise. To the Turk it was a part of the vilayet of Beirut, to the Arab it was the southern part of Syria."

I fancy that it is a just description of the line of argument in the above quotation to say that it is pleasantly extravagant. It has a side to it which is so fantastic that it is almost entertaining. Palestine, declares Mr. Sidebotham, is not a country unless the Jews occupy it. Only their presence can make it one.

There is no reason on earth why Palestine *should* be a country. It is too small, its boundaries are artificial in the main, there is nothing to distinguish it from the territory just to the north, its sacred character has not the slightest national quality. The little province is in fact nothing but a section of Syria. Its existence for centuries has been provincial. Mr. Sidebotham recognizes this. In the eyes of the Arabs

it is, he says, no more than "a part of Arabia," or is "only the southern part of Syria."

It is now that he becomes odd. Because Palestine is only a part of Arab territory he would take it from the Arabs' ownership. No doubt he allows that the Arabs have a right to a country somewhere, but to the parts of this country their right vanishes. If the Jews come along and propose to turn part of an Arab country into a whole Jewish country, then the Arabs lose that part automatically. As an entity the part is untenable. But by argument on these lines we might get so far as to find our claim to the whole of England unsound, if we lay claim to it as part of the inheritance of the British race, as part of the British Commonwealth. For that is the way in which the Arabs lay claim to Palestine, on the ground that it is part of the inheritance of the Arab race, part of the Arab commonwealth or nexus of lands in Arab occupation.

To return to the general issue, the situation laid down for the Arabs, of Palestine by typical Zionist writers is that these Arabs are political slaves, persons not having the right of ownership of their place of birth, a place indeed which in their hands politically would not exist.

Let us go back to the Declaration. After it had been published an event occurred which is closely attached to this particular question of national prerogatives, and may serve to close the discussion of it. The Zionist leaders approached the chief Allied Governments with a request for pronouncements of encouragement and support similar to that which Great Britain had given them.

A deception awaited them. From the French, on the 9th of Februaty, 1918, they received a note which was no more than adequate. Mr. Sacher, or any other of the Political Committee, would have turned out some-thing much more attractive. It ran:

M. Sokolov représentant des organisations sionistes, a été reçu ce matin au Ministère des Affaires Etrangères par M. Stephen Pichon, qui a été heureux de lui confirmer que l'entente est compléte entre les Gouvernments français et britannique en ce qui concerne la question d'un établissement juif en Palestine.

Not really a satisfactory statement, it will be seen. The French evaded giving the Zionists any direct guarantee. They confined themselves to saying that they were in agreement with the British Government's policy. This left the onus of the policy upon the British, and the Quai d'Orsay spokesmen gave no pledge at all that they would continue in agreement with it as it developed. Moreover, the French

note was sent with a covering letter in which M. Sokolov was complimented upon the "*dévouement avec lequel vous poursuivez la réalisation des vœux de vos co-réligionnaires.*" A very back-handed compliment. It discounted the whole nationalist and not religious platform which the devoted M. Sokolov was straining to construct.

But it was when Italy was approached that this best-laid scheme really went agley. Here is the Italian pronouncement, given in London on the 9th of May, 1918, to M. Sokolov by the Marchese Imperiali, the Italian Ambassodor, "by order of Baron Sonnino":

In relazione alle domande che gli sono state rivolte il Governo di Sua Maestà é lieto di confermare le precendenti dichiarazioni già fatte a mezzo dei suoi rappresentani a Washington, l'Aja e Salonico, di essere cioé disposto ad adoperarsi con piacere per facilitare lo stabilirsi in Palestina di un centro nazionale ebraico, nell'intesa pero' che non ne venga nessun pregiudizio allo statofgiuridico e politico delle già esistenti comunità religiose ed ai diritti civili e politici che gli israeliti già godono in ogni altro paese.

(In connection with the requests which have been made to it His Majesty's Government is happy to confirm the previous statements made through its representatives in Washington, The Hague and Salonica, that is to say that it is prepared to take steps with pleasure in order to facilitate the foundation in Palestine of a Jewish national centre, on the understanding however that no prejudice shall arise through it to the legal and political status of existing religious communities and to the civil and political rights already enjoyed by Israelites in any other country.)

The Italian Government in its pronouncement put in the missing words which made all the difference. Since the petitioners who had asked for a declaration had caused the Palestine population to be divided into "communities," the Consulta took care to signify that this division was a religious one. It spiked the guns of Lord Balfour and Dr. Weizmann who had used the religious idea to make the division into communities, but thereon had treated the communities as national divisions.

More important and more meaning still was the insertion of the words "legal and political status." The Italian Government guaranteed that the National Home should not prejudice those very fundamental rights of the Arabs which the Balfour Declaration deliberately had excised. With entire politeness it indicated that it was not deceived by the terms of the Balfour document, and that it would not be party to the suppression of native rights.

It is impossible not to admire the neatness of the rebuke; the hoisting of the political Zionists with their own petard by rejecting their claims under guise of confirming them—just as they had drafted for the Arabs; the elegant assumption that Lord Balfour had intended a genuine guarantee and that Italy would make it more to his mind by making it watertight.

This Italian guarantee was given, need it be said, long before the days of Fascism, by the old Italian Kingdom, democratic and liberal, so that it cannot be ascribed to rivalry or spite or other such motive. It puts Italy in a strong position at present, it is simply an example of how honesty can indeed be the best policy. Not surprisingly, it has been kept rather quiet. The version of it with which Mrs. Andrews credits M. Sokolov in her *The Holy Land Under Mandate* is not exact. Mrs. Andrews quotes Italy as safeguarding only the "civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities or the legal or political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country." The Italian Declaration is turned thus into another Balfour Declaration. The true version, given by M. Sokolov, in the original Italian just cited, is very different and stands to this day, with formidable implications attached to it upon which it is unnecessary to dilate.

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