



The Arab Angle – undramatized

The Jewish War Front (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1940)

The transformation of Palestine can be effected to the full without dislodging the Palestinian Arabs. All current affirmations to the contrary are utterly incorrect. A territory of over 100,000 square kilometers settled at the average density of France (87 inhabitants per square kilometer) would hold over 8 million inhabitants; at the density of Switzerland (104) over 10 million; at density of Germany or Italy (140) about 14 million. It now holds, counting Arabs and Jews and Trans-Jordanians and all, just over one million and a half inhabitants. There is margin enough left for Palestine to absorb the better part of East-Central Europe's ghetto – the better part of five million souls – without approaching even the moderate density of France. Unless the Arabs choose to go away of their own accord, there is no need for them to emigrate.

Another fallacy is the assertion that if the Arabs were in the minority in a State predominantly Jewish, they would be persecuted and oppressed. The last people to repeat this fallacy ought to be the authors of the 1939 White Paper. Since they assure us that the Jews, condemned to remain a one-to-two minority in Palestine, would not only not be oppressed but would even enjoy the delights of a Jewish National Home, what grounds have they for suggesting that it would be disastrous for the Arabs if the position were reversed? It would be much more logical for the authors of the White Paper to offer the Arab minority the same safeguards which they consider to be sufficient to ensure the welfare of a Jewish minority.

It is absurd to assume that an ethnical minority is always and everywhere an oppressed minority. The assumption is untrue. The Scots who have left Scotland and the Welsh who have left Wales live scattered all over England, yet it has not been suggested that their rights are curtailed. Consider the position of the Catholic French-speaking minority in the mixed province of Ontario, Canada; they are anything but oppressed. Soviet Russia has been guilty of many sins, but not one can deny that her



ethnic minorities enjoy a very reasonable equality of status – in so far as anything can be “enjoyed” in that political climate, Czechoslovakia was a model state in this respect; as is Finland today, where the Swedish minority enjoys a position even better in some respects than that of the Scots in Great Britain. Nothing, of course, is perfect on this earth, and there is no doubt that it is pleasanter to be in the majority than in minority, even under the best conditions imaginable; but that does not mean that the status of a minority is everywhere and always a tragedy. Every great people has its outlying fragments which form minorities in other countries: the English in South Africa, the French in Canada. Belgium and Switzerland, the Germans all over the world. Their position depends on the régime. Under a decent régime a minority can live in reasonable contentment. The world has no right to assume that Jewish statesmanship is unable to create as decent a régime as that created by English, Canadian or Swiss statesmanship. After all, it is from Jewish sources that the world has learned how the “stranger within thy gates” should be treated.

There is only one circumstance in which it is a tragedy to constitute a minority; it is the case of the people which is only a minority everywhere and always a minority, dispersed among alien races, with no corner of the earth to call its own, and no home in which to find refuge. Such is not the position of the Arabs, with four Arabian countries on the east of the Suez Canal, and five others west of Suez. Some of these lands are already independent, others are not so as yet; but in each of them there is no question of any but an Arab majority; each if them is already an Arab national homeland.

It would be an idle pastime, at this present stage, to devise draft constitutions for the Jewish Palestine of the future. But it may be that some people are genuinely worried as to what would happen to the rights of the Palestinian Arabs if the country became a Jewish State. The author can at least give them some idea of what Jews themselves intend to do in this respect when they are in the majority and when Palestine is a self-governing State. It may reassure such persons to learn how not the moderate but precisely the so-called “extremist” wing of Zionism visualizes the constitution of the Palestine of the future. The following extracts are quoted from a



draft worked out by a Revisionist Executive in 1934, so it might be said that this tells us “the worst that can happen” to the Palestinian Arabs. The draft is not an official programme, and the writer is not prepared to defend it in all its aspects. Still, it was the result of much careful labour; a wide range of precedents had been studied, and documents consulted which were regarded with the utmost respect in the days when the intelligentsia of East-Central Europe — which then included Russia — was infatuated with the theories of the Austrian Socialists’ *Nationalitaeten-Staat*: Rudolf Springer’s books, the minutes of the Bruenn congress of the Austrian Social Democratic Party, the excellent Hungarian law of 1868 on the use of minority languages in civil service communications, and even the truly remarkable old Turkish, legislation as to the autonomy of the various ethno-religious communities, whose official title was *Millet* = “nations”: Millet-i-Roum, Millet -i-Ermeni, Millet-i-Moussévié (Greek, Armenian Mosaic.) Only a few sections can be quoted here: those dealing with civic equality, languages, so-called “cultural autonomy”, the Holy Places, and the land laws. Only the broad issues will be touched upon. These quotations will bear out the statement made by this writer before the Palestine Royal Commission: that the Jews are ready to guarantee to the Arab minority in a Jewish Palestine the maximum of the rights which they claimed but never obtained for themselves in other countries.

In reading this draft it should be remembered that according to the principle which is the alpha and omega of Zionist Revisionism, Palestine can be promoted to independent Statehood only after the constitution of a Jewish majority. On the other hand, the Revisionists’ idea of an independent Palestine was then (1934) a Dominion within the British Empire, as it still is to many among them.

1. Civic Equality

1. Provided nothing be done to hinder any foreign Jew from repatriating to Palestine, and, by doing so, automatically becoming a Palestinian citizen, the principle of equal rights for all citizens of any race, creed, language or class shall be enacted without limitation throughout all sectors of the country’s public life.



2. In every Cabinet where the Prime Minister is a Jew, the vice-premiership shall be offered to an Arab, and vice-versa.
3. Proportional sharing by Jews and Arabs both in the charges and in the benefits of the State shall be the rule with regard to parliamentary elections, civil and military service, and budgetary grants.
4. The same rule shall apply to mixed municipalities or county councils.

2. Languages

1. The Hebrew and the Arabic languages shall enjoy equal rights and equal legal validity.
2. No State law, proclamation or ordinance; no coin, banknote or stamp of the State; no publications or inscription produced at the State's expense shall be valid unless executed identically in both Hebrew and Arabic.
3. Both Hebrew and Arabic shall be used with equal legal effect in Parliament, in the Courts, in the schools and in general before any office or organ of the State, as well as in any school of whatever degree.
4. All offices of the State shall answer any applicant, orally and in writing, in the language of his application, whether Hebrew or Arabic.

3. Cultural autonomy

1. The Jewish and the Arab ethno-communities¹ shall be recognized as autonomous public bodies of equal status before the law. Should the Christian Arabs, or any other group of citizens reasonably justified in claiming autonomy,

¹ The word is used in the original is the Hebrew equivalent of "nationalists". As in English the term denotes State allegiance rather than ethnical allegiance, the word is translated as above.

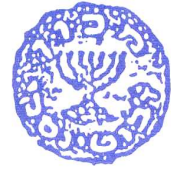


also demand a measure of independent recognition, Parliament shall be entitled to grant the request.

2. The following matters shall be delegated by the State of each ethno-community with regard to its members :
 - (a) religion and personal status ;
 - (b) education in all its branches and grades, especially in the compulsory stages;
 - (c) public relief, including all forms of social assistance;
 - (d) settlement of ordinary law cases arising out of the above-mentioned matters.
3. Each ethno-community shall elect its National Diet with the right to issued ordinances and levy taxes within the limits of its autonomy, and so to appoint, a national executive responsible before the Diet.
4. A permanent Minister of Cabinet rank, independent of all parties, shall represent each ethno-community in the country's government.

4. THE HOLY PLACES

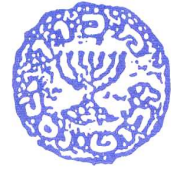
1. The relevant areas within the Old City of Jerusalem, to be delimited under the authority of the League of Nations, shall enjoy the same measure of extra-territoriality as that universally recognized in the case of embassies.
2. Each of these areas shall constitute a municipality under a council appointed by agreement between the ecclesiastic authorities concerned.
3. A similar régime shall apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to other holy sites within the country.



4. Except in war, pilgrim permits of sufficient duration shall be freely granted to nationals of any State: subject only to genuine requirements of hygiene, traffic and public safety, and provided any paupers among the pilgrims shall be maintained, and in due course repatriated, at the expense of the respective ecclesiastic authority.
5. A delegate of the League of Nations, with the status of Ambassador, shall be appointed to represent the interests concerned.

5. Land

1. A Palestine Land Court shall be formed including, among other members, judges and agricultural experts belonging to both ethno-communities.
2. All the waste lands, as well as all lands inadequately cultivated in the opinion of the Court, shall be requisitioned (under fair compensation in the case of the latter) to form the State's Land Reserve.
3. After improvement at the expense of the State, reclaimed areas of the Land Reserve shall be divided into allotments to be granted, at fair prices and easy terms of credit, to individual applicants and groups.
4. Allotment shall be distributed under the Land Court's supervision to Jewish and Arab applicants and groups indiscriminately.
5. Each applicant shall have to satisfy the Land Court:
 - (a) that he owns no other land;
 - (b) that he possesses a reasonable minimum of capital or equipment for working that land, no matter whether his own or supplied by supporters;
 - (c) that he will work the land personally.



Whether the Arabs would find all this a sufficient inducement to remain in a Jewish country is another question. Even if they did not, the author would refuse to see a tragedy or a disaster in their willingness to emigrate. The Palestine Royal Commission did not shrink from the suggestion. Courage is infectious. Since we have this great moral authority for calmly envisaging the exodus of 350,000 Arabs from one corner of Palestine, we need not regard the possible departure of 900,000 with dismay. The writer, as he has already said, cannot see any necessity for this exodus; it would even be undesirable from many points of view; but if it should appear that the Arabs would prefer to migrate, the prospect can be discussed without any pretence of concern.

Since 1923, when within a few months at least 700,000 Greeks were moved to Macedonia, and 350,000 Turks to Thrace and Anatolia, the idea of such migrations has been familiar and almost popular. Herr Hitler, detested as he is, has recently been enhancing its popularity. Of course, his critics very strongly disapprove of his policy in removing Germans from the Trentino and the Balticum and planting them in fields and houses robbed from the Poles; but it is the robbing of the Poles, not the moving of the Germans, which really elicits the censure. One cannot help feeling that if only Germans, on the one hand, and Italians and Balts on the other were concerned, the operation might in the end prove not so bad for their common welfare. When Mr. Roosevelt foresees the existence of 20 million potential refugees after the war, he is doubtless considering that the position of all minorities may have become untenable in many countries, so that some radical solution may have to be found. Nuisantia, which, as we know, is situated between Andivia and Hedulia, and populated by a potpourri of both races, has a majority of the Andivians, so in 1918 it was adjudged to Andivia. The result? Andivia has now a minority of 300,000 Hedulians, who are causing trouble. Perhaps, then, we had better annex the province to Hedulia? But then Hedulia will have a minority of 500,000 Andivians, with the same result. Majority rule is perhaps not such a perfect panacea, even where political parties are concerned, but in the case of nationalities the medicine simply does not work except as an irritant; and the alternative, minority rule, would be still worse. One really radical remedy would be



the Graeco-Turkish precedent of 1923. The writer frankly doubts whether that would be feasible; at all events, other solutions – which cannot be examined here, – might be given a trial. But theoretically the idea of redistributing minorities en masse is becoming more popular among “the best people,” and there is no longer any taboo the discussion of the subject.

There is, moreover, one great ethical difference between the case of Palestine and that of all the other poly-ethnical areas with regard to this particular question of allowing the minority to migrate. In all the other areas friction is caused by ambition: one section wishes to dominate, or so at least the weaker section fears. Such an ambition may be, or seem justifiable or excusable, in the sense that it is an expression of inherited vitality, so strongly dynamic that only the most angelic self-restraint could keep it always on the leash: but even so it is, after all, only an ambition, not a real need; a healthy “appetite,” not a “hunger”. In Palestine any inconvenience to the native population from the influx of immigrants arises from the tragic necessity that these immigrants must find a home. It has nothing to do with ambition, nothing to do with the will to dominate over anyone; in many individual cases it may have little to do even with a personal desire to immigrate, for in any mass migration there must be hundreds or thousands who would have preferred to remain in the old home if they could.

The cause is genuine hunger, the nostalgic passion of people who have nowhere else where they can make a home for themselves. Should the Arabs prefer to migrate, the very fact that they can do so would prove that they, on the contrary, have a “somewhere else” where they can build a new home. This contest between “nowhere else” and somewhere else” would only be an echo of a universal feature of our modern age, the inevitable settlement between the “have nots” and the “haves”. No “have not” need feel guilty because the scales have been levelled as they ought to have been long ago.

One thing seems certain: any Arab country which should find the courage and the acreage for inviting such an immigration of trekkers would reap enormous material



advantages. It would immediately have unlimited sums of capital and the world's best experts at its disposal for the most ambitious schemes of land reclamation and irrigation. The Arab trekkers, moreover, would probably migrate with donkey loads of pelf. All the problems connected with the evacuation of the European "zone" would become incomparably easier. Who knows?

But this is an aside; it has nothing to do with war aims. Palestine, astride the Jordan, has room enough for the million of Arabs, room for another million of their eventual progeny, for several million Jews, and for peace; for so much peace that there would then be peace also in Europe.