

## Excerpts: America and the Founding of Israel

In 1800 Palestine was somewhat feudal, with many large landowners - some of them absentee - and impoverished peasants working for them, as well as small, independent farmers, craftsmen and shopkeepers. Semimadic Bedouin grazed sheep and goats. They also raided farms and villages, which had little police protection. This discouraged settling rural areas. Some land, especially in the Jordan valley and along the coast, was swampy, malarial and sparsely inhabited, Jews lived primarily in the four holy cities, Jerusalem, Hebron, Tiberias and Safed. They were mostly shopkeepers, artisans, and students of the Bible, the Talmud and other Jewish religious teachings. Virtually none were farmers.

Meanwhile many European and U.S. Jews thought that assimilation into the culture and society in which they found themselves was both possible and desirable. ... Before 1882 relatively few Jews embraced any form of Zionism. ...

Russia has a long history of anti-Semitism. ... In 1881 Czar Alexander II was murdered. A Jew was one of several people accused in his death. Alexander III, who succeeded his father, condoned progroms - anti-Semitic rioting - which began in June 1881. When Jews tried physically to defend themselves, police moved against *them*. The brutality quickly spread throughout the Pale of Settlement, ending in 1884. Hundreds of Jews had been murdered. Thousands fled, mostly to western Europe and Amerika. ... The progroms triggered the first large-scale immigration to Palestine - the First Aliyah - between 1882 and 1903.

The Ottoman sultan, 'Abdul Hamid II, (ruled 1876-1909), was somewhat liberal towards Jews but opposed their moving to Palestine. He feared it would increase European governments already extensive meddling in Palestine. He was especially wary of immigrants from Russia, his expansionist neighbor ... in 1882 the sultan banned Jewish immigration and land purchase. This ban was soon withdrawn but reinstated in 1891. However, it was not strictly enforced; his officials could be bribed. During the First Aliyah some 25,000 Jews moved to Palestine. They founded several farming settlements ... Jews in Palestine increased to between 27,000 and 50,000 by 1904.

... some Arabs reacted negatively even to the First Aliyah. In 1891 Arab merchants and craftsmen in Jerusalem telegraphed the Ottoman grand vizier, noting that they expected more Jewish immigration. They called for a halt to this and to further Jewish purchase of land. ...

Political Zionism included the desire to form in Palestine an independent Jewish state. A Russian Jewish immigrant, Ze'ev Dubnov, wrote in 1882 that his final purpose was "to take

possession in due course of Palestine ..." ... "to put all the land, all the industry, in the hands of Jews." ... "Then the Jews, if necessary with arms in their hands, will publicly proclaim themselves masters of their own, ancient fatherland." ...

Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), a Jewish Austrian playwright and journalist ...In 1896 he published *Der Judenstaat*. ... He considered both Palestine and part of Argentina desirable sites. ...

... First Zionist Congress, in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897. It stated:

Zionism strives to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine secured by public law. ...

According to corrected Ottoman figures, in 1897 Palestine had 563,000 people, including 529,500 Arabs and 21,500 Jews.

As educated Arabs learned of Zionism and its goals some became concered. A few months after the First Zionist Congress, a Lebanese writer, Rashid Rida, warned ...

Yusuf al-Khalidi was a member of a prominent Muslim family in Jerusalem. In 1899, while major of Jerusalem, he wrote to France's chief rabbi, Zadoc Kahn: "There are still uninhabited countries where one could settle millions of poor Jews who may perhaps become happy there and one day constitute a nation ... But ... let Palestine be left in peace."

Kahn sent the letter to Herzl, ... Herzl assured al-Khalidi that *no one was trying to remove Arabs*.

Herzl repeatedly tried to obtain a charter for an autonomous Jewish national home in Palestine. The sultan refused, but offered to let Jews settle in small groups throughout the empire. They would have to become Turkish citizens; immigration to Palestine could be only minimal. Herzl rejected the offer and considered other sites. Because of increased Russian Jewish immigration to Britain since 1882, its Jewish population by 1902 exceeded 100,00. London wished to restrict further immigration and thus was open to considering Jewish settlements in British possessions. Zionists proposed the island of Cyprus ... Britain rejected the plan; it would require evicting Greeks and Muslims.

In April 1903, the British colonial secretary told Herzl that Uganda, then a British colony, seemed ideal for a Jewish homeland. The site tentatively offered, which is now in Kenya, had some 6,000 square miles. Because of tribal warfare it had few people. ... Both Herzl and Britain pursued the idea. ... However, the Russian delegates to the Sixth Zionist Congress, held in Basel that August, bitterly opposed Uganda and would only consider Palestine. ...

... At that time many if not most Zionists were Russian. ... the battle continued at the Seventh Zionist Congress in 1905. The

Congress, urged by Russian delegates, voted overwhelmingly "to reject all colonization programs other than those in Palestine and adjacent countries."

After the Seventh Congress's vote, forty delegates opposing it founded the Jewish Territorial Organization (ITO) in August 1905. It explored sites in East Africa, Cyrenaica (Libya), Angola, Mesopotamia (Iraq), Canada, Mexico, Honduras, Dutch Guiana (Suriname), Australia and Siberia. All were judged unusable because either local governments opposed their use or the inhabitants were expected to, or the sites lacked water or had other serious weather problems. Meanwhile, the Galveston Immigration Scheme (GIS) brought 10,000 Jews to Texas between 1906 and 1914; ITO ran GIS from 1907 until GIS ended at the start of World War I. ...

... "Palestine-only" Zionists of 1905 were partly responsible for European Jews not having anywhere to flee from the Nazis.

In 1903, widespread Russian pogroms again erupted. Before the ensuing Second Aliyah was ended by World War I, some 40,000 more Jews - mostly Russian - came to Palestine-only. (The causal relationship between European anti-Semitism and Zionism generally, and Jewish immigration to Palestine in particular, manifests itself repeatedly. ... by 1914, some forty-seven farming settlements with about 12,000 Jewish occupants had been founded. Like many other Zionist projects, many of these were largely funded by Rothschild family members, some of whom had softened their anti-Zionism. ...

According to an ancient custom recognized by Ottoman law, Palestinian villagers shared the use of grazing land around their village even if they did not hold individual title to the land. Some new Jewish landowners did not allow this. ... if Second Aliyah immigrants bought a farm village from, for instance, an absentee Arab owner, its Arab peasants often were forcibly replaced with Jewish settlements as a threat to their livelihood. ...

In the spring of 1908, Jewish and Arab workers in Jaffa clashed. S.D. Levontin, the Jewish director of the local Anglo-Palestine Bank, complained to David Wolffsohn, the head of the World Zionist executive, that young Jewish men were largely responsible. He said that they were armed with sticks, knives and guns, and behaved toward Arabs with arrogance and contempt. That same year Levontin also wrote to Wolffsohn that Zionist labor leaders were creating ill will for Zionism by urging that jobs be given to Jews instead of to Arabs.

Arabs also complained that immigrants did not bother to learn about Palestinian Arabs' customs or respect them. ...

Richard Lichtheim, a German who represented the Zionist central executive committee in Istanbul, wrote in 1913: "The Arabs

are and will remain our natural opponents. They ... want to preserve their nation and cultivate their culture ... The Jew for them is a competitor who threatens their predominance in Palestine." Later Lichtheim stated that even before 1914 it was clear that the national aspirations of Zionists and Palestinian Arabs were incompatible. ...

By 1914, some 56,000-60,000 Jews and some 659,000 Arabs lived in Palestine. ... (Before the 1870s the Ottomans did little census work in Palestine.) ...

World War I moved Zionism's center to London. Britain became much more immersed in Zionism because of Britain's Balfour Declaration and its postwar mandate over Palestine. ...

To win over both Arab and Jews Britain made contradictory promises about Palestine to each.

Between July 1915 and March 1916, Sir Henry McMahon, British High Commissioner in Cairo, and Sherif Hussein of Mecca, an Arab leader in the Ottoman Empire, exchanged ten letters - the Hussein-McMahon Correspondence. ... The bargaining produced a conditioned British pledge of independence for Arabs. Arabs maintain that this included independence for Palestine. With the Allied victory, Britain contended that Palestine was not included. Arguments to back Britain's position are complex; their validity is disputed. ...

The inherent moral right of Palestine's inhabitants to determine their own future did not, of course, belong to Britain. It certainly had no moral right to grant or withhold independence. However, the Allies won the war and Britain engineered its own acquisition of the legal power to deny the inhabitants of Palestine the exercise of their moral right to self-determination.

While Britain bargained with Arabs it also secretly negotiated primarily with France and secondarily with Russia over the division among themselves of Ottoman lands in Asia. Their Sykes-Picot Agreement of May 1916 ...

... most of Palestine went under British control; its northern section went under French control.

... America entered the war in April 1917. This was six months before Britain adopted the Balfour Declaration ... Nevertheless, in 1937 Lloyd George told the Palestine Royal (Peel) Commission: "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."

The British War Cabinet's adoption of the Balfour Declaration on October 31, 1917 ...

... mid-October Wilson more formally sent Britain his approval. However, he asked London not to make it known publicly, for after Britain would make the declaration itself public, American Jews would ask him for his approval of it and he would publicly give it. ... Wilson strengthened the position of the pro-declaration members of the War Cabinet. In doing this he seriously undermined the fulfillment of the moral right of Palestinian Arabs to self-determination.

..., Arab leaders strongly objected. However, Sherif Hussein's son, Feisal, hoping Britain would make him King of Syria, allegedly signed two pledges to support a Jewish national home in Palestine. When the French took over Syria, they expelled Feisal, who claimed the signatures on the pledges were forgeries. Within a few months after Britain adopted Balfour, France, Italy, China, Japan, Greece and Siam at least implicitly endorsed it. Although Wilson had already approved a draft of Balfour, his government could not formally endorse it because it was at peace with Turkey. With Wilson approving Balfour and the War Cabinet passing it, both the British government and at least the White House in effect approved of Zionism itself. ... Only then did many, but not all, British and U.S. Jews drop their anti-Zionism.

The declaration did not adequately safeguard the rights of the Palestinian Arabs. It refers only to their "civil and religious rights," not to their political rights. ...

Both Britain, and Wilson in supporting Britain, seemingly were working out of a colonialist moral framework in which right was judged by might. ... In 1917 Palestinians were being victimized by this colonialist moral framework.

... In the following years Britain allowed so many non-Palestinians to immigrate that they did in fact upset "the common good rightly understood." ... Britain would allow so many Zionists to immigrate that they would eventually be able to help force the establishment not only of a home but of a state.

... Balfour told the War Cabinet that the term, "'national home' ... did not necessarily involve the early establishment of an independent Jewish state, which was a matter of gradual development in accordance with the ordinary laws of political evolution."

... The declaration was bound to cause dissent because it was virtually self-contradictory: ...

... In 1918, Y.A. Wilkansky ... told the Conference of the *Yishuv* (the Jews living in Palestine) ...:

... When you enter into the midst of the Arab nation and do not allow it to unite, here you are taking its life. The Arabs are not salt-fish; they have blood, they live and they feel pain with the entry of a 'foreign body' into their midst. ... [2]

**References:**

[1] America and the founding of Israel :an investigation of the morality of America's role /John W. Mulhall. ,94062144 0964515709 (pbk.), page pp 43ff

[2] America and the founding of Israel :an investigation of the morality of America's role /John W. Mulhall. ,94062144 0964515709 (pbk.), page pp 60ff

[3] America and the founding of Israel :an investigation of the morality of America's role /John W. Mulhall. ,94062144 0964515709 (pbk.), page pp 73ff