

**A History  
of  
Palestine**



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*If I were an Arab leader, I would never sign an agreement with Israel. ...They see but one thing: we have come and we have stolen their country. Why would they accept that?"*

David Ben Gurion, First Prime Minister of Israel.

## Palestine

### Overview

Australia presently has members of her armed forces engaged in both Iraq and Afghanistan, but it is the continuing dispute between Israel and the Arabs over Palestine that is sending shock waves through the Middle East and directly and indirectly contributing to the continuing turbulence of the region. Knowledge of the background to this festering dispute will aid in understanding the continuing conflicts in the Holy Land. It is however, very difficult to give an even handed summary of the situation since by treating both sides equally a position supporting the existence of the state of Israel has already been taken. Israel offends by its very presence. Moreover, most of the academic history of the dispute has come from the Israeli side since Israel has a Westminster type cabinet system which releases cabinet papers after 30 to 50 years. These papers are available to academic historians who do not have access to similar documents from the Arab side which remain inaccessible even to Arab historians.

This monograph is concerned mainly with the dispute between the Arabs and the Jews over the legitimate occupation and ownership of the Holy Land and thus is focused on events in the last 150 years. Both sides, however, make liberal use of selected points in history to justify their claims and this work is intended to provide the historical facts in as unbiased a manner as is possible by an author with Jewish ancestry writing from a European perspective.

There are only two sides in a war and there were many occasions where "my enemy's enemy is my friend" resulted in unlikely alliances. A Jewish extremist group actually offered to ally with the Nazis in World War II to assist in forcing the British out of Palestine and the leader of a Palestinian group spent the war in Berlin making anti-Jewish broadcasts for the Nazis. Each side tends to quote the example of their enemy in propaganda and ignore the blemish in their own history.

Adding to the complexity is the fact that most of the major players felt they were serving a higher cause. Gifted administrators, clerics and soldiers, whether serving Christianity, Islam, the British Empire or the United States strove to advance their cause convinced that by doing so they were also advancing the interests of humanity as a whole.

It would be disingenuous to imagine that the conflict is free from religion. This work sets out only such religious facts in history as can be proven by archeology or by the reading of ancient manuscripts. The author himself is unable to read ancient scripts himself so has had to rely on secondary sources for translation. The Holy Books of the

three Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, are not accorded special place unless their claims can be independently proven.

## **The Origins**

Palestine meaning “The Land of the Philistines” was first recorded in an Egyptian temple of 1150 BCE and referred to one of the Aegean sea peoples who invaded Egyptian territory. Using their ships to effect surprise, they could land anywhere in strength and overwhelm the local defences. There is archeological evidence of tremendous destruction at the time, usually thought to be evidence of raids by the sea peoples. The Eastern Mediterranean, however, is a very seismically active area with three major tectonic plates in collision with the Africa Plate sliding past the Arabian Plate to the east and diving under the Eurasian Plate to the north. The resulting earthquakes create fracture lines where water can come to the surface creating inviting oases where the earliest towns, such as Jericho, were built and it was probably seismic destruction that also resulted in a depopulation. The Philistines were then able to occupy an area to the south-east of Jerusalem now referred to as Gaza.

The Jews, otherwise known as Hebrews, were a Semitic race who occupied an area in the highlands around Jerusalem and were also able to expand into the depopulated areas along the Mediterranean coast where they collided with the Philistines.

Having defeated the Philistines, in about 1000 BCE, it is commonly thought that the Jews entered a golden era under the great kings David and Solomon who ruled a large empire in great splendour. As is pointed out by Professor of Archaeology at Tel Aviv University, Israel Finkelstein, however, at the time of the great kings Jerusalem was a small iron age hill fort of perhaps a thousand people and there is very little archaeological evidence of the House of David and none at all of a king named Solomon. If David and Solomon existed at all, they were minor hill-fort chieftains and the stories of the great kings are thought to be one of the foundation myths so common amongst nations. In political history, as will be seen on many occasions, it doesn't really matter whether certain religious figures or acts are true - the only thing that counts is whether people believe them to be true. The Jews believed then and many believe now that these great kings are one of the guiding lights of their religion.

The Jews are granted respect, in the West at least, as the people who were led to the revelation of Monotheism. According to the Western tradition, God chose the Jews as his own people and sent Prophets to instruct them in the required manner of living. The Prophet Moses, for example, was given tablets inscribed in Hebrew with ten commandments. Moses himself was said to have written the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, though he traditionally lived a thousand years before the invention of the Hebrew script. There is also virtually no archeological evidence of monotheism prior to the 7th century BCE, some 400 years after the time of the Great Kings. Monotheism appears to have been practiced as the orthodox religion only after the 7th century BCE and the reforms of a King Hezekiah and his grandson Josiah with the Biblical authors retrospectively dating it back to the time of a mythical Abraham some 1300 years before. The fabulous stories of King David and Solomon can be thought of as the royal propaganda of Kings Hezekiah and Josiah. It was in their

interests to portray the ancient kings as being great, wise men with a large empire. If they were to emulate the Great Kings, perhaps similar fame and fortune would be theirs.

Then in about 600 BCE, the Jewish kingdom of Judea was conquered by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, the Temple destroyed and the nobles and learned men deported to Babylon. It is in Babylon that it is thought much of the Hebrew Bible was completed. The exile lasted only about 80 years since King Nebuchadnezzar's empire was rather short-lived and was conquered in turn by the Persians under King Cyrus. Cyrus allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem where they rebuilt their temple.

Alexander the Great conquered this area in 332 BCE and after his untimely early death it became part of the Seleucid Empire. The Seleucid Emperor Antiochus IV found his empire threatened by the Persians to the east and the Romans to the west. In order to strengthen his position by creating a unified people he attempted to enforce Hellenisation on his subjects. This involved raising a statue of Jupiter in the Jewish temple and led to a revolt under the brilliant Hebrew leader Judas Maccabeus (known as Maccabeus). The revolt was successful and the Jewish Hasmonean kingdom of Judea was established. The kingdom expanded into the areas of the Philistines and these old enemies of the Jews were converted to Judaism.

There then occurred a problem common in history: a disputed succession to the crown. One of the protagonists for the crown of Judea invited the Roman general Pompey, who was campaigning nearby, to assist them to victory. The arrangement through history is always that the successful contender then becomes the client of the defender. So the Kingdom of Judea was added to the great Empire of Rome.

According to their scriptures the Jews had expected a Messiah from the House of David to rule them in splendour but found themselves instead subjects of the Pagan Romans. There was much unrest in this Roman province as the Jews desperately awaited the Messiah to save them from the Romans and re-establish a glorious Jewish kingdom.

## **The Advent of Christianity**

Amidst the turmoil of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century of the Common Era a Jewish temple official had a revelation "on the road to Damascus" about a Jewish insurgent who had been crucified by the Romans for armed rebellion. It was revealed to this official, who became known as the Apostle Paul, that the crucified insurgent Joshua (Greek Jesus) was not just one of a long line of Jewish insurgents but rather was a divine manifestation who was sacrificed to redeem, in a spiritual rather than a physical sense, not only the Jews, but the whole of humanity. This daughter religion of Judaism, Christianity, was very successful, offering eternal salvation, though for some reason, only to persons who believed Paul's revelation to be true.

The Jews, however, continued to revolt against the Romans and in 132 CE, Bar Kochba (Aramaic "Son of the Star" from Numbers 24:17) launched a major and

ultimately unsuccessful rebellion. After crushing this revolt, the Roman Emperor Hadrian exiled the remaining Jews and to emphasise their utter defeat, changed the name of the region from Judea Province to Syria Palestina.

Disputed successions continued in Rome itself and in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, General Constantine was proclaimed emperor by his troops in York in Northern Britain. As he advanced with his forces to take up the imperial mantle he was encouraged by a vision of the Christian acronym, Chi Rho (the initial letters of Jesus Christ in Greek) with the legend *In Hoc Signo Vincas* (in this sign conquer). When he became the successful Roman Emperor he adopted the Christian religion and encouraged members of the Empire to convert as well- it being considered advantageous to be of the same religion as the Ruler. He found, however, that there was an intense dispute in the Christian camp about the nature of Jesus. The orthodox position was that Jesus was a human being but had as well a divine nature and when he had returned to heaven he had left a “comforter” to maintain the divine presence on earth. A spark of this presence (the Holy Spirit) was said to exist in all Christian believers. While maintaining the Monotheism of the Jews, God was now said to be a Trinity of Three Persons- God the Father, God the Son (Jesus) and God the Holy Spirit. On the other hand there was a large group of Christians who followed the teaching of Priest Arius. They were of the opinion that Jesus was only a human prophet in the tradition of Abraham and Moses and not divine. Emperor Constantine called a convention of Christian bishops at one of his imperial palaces at Nicaea to hammer this out. The result was the adoption of the Nicæan creed and acceptance of the Trinitarian position of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Other Christians were given the option of either accepting the Trinitarian view, leaving the empire or death. Many Arian Christians fled north into Germany or south of Syria into Arabia. Emperor Constantine moved the capitol of the Roman Empire from Rome to Byzantium, (which he renamed Constantinople) on the European side of the Dardanelles.

With the fall of the Western Empire to Germanic forces in 450 CE, the remaining Eastern Roman Empire became known in the West as the Byzantine Empire (though the Byzantines regarded themselves as Romans). The empires of Rome and Persia had collided around the area of what is now Turkey and Syria with wars that had been continuing for eight hundred years. Finally in 610 the Persian Emperor Chosroes II gathered his forces for an immense attack on Rome and drove the Byzantine Roman forces back to the gates of Constantinople itself and also swept down and conquered the Byzantine province of Syria, which included the area of Palestine. There was an immense slaughter of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The Roman Emperor Heraclius then taking advantage of the very extended supply lines of the Persians was able to rally his forces and in turn forced the Persians back to their original borders. Both sides were exhausted after this war which had lasted sixteen years and cost hundreds of thousands of deaths in the battles and the resulting famines. The Romans kept what remaining forces they had in northern Syria and Anatolia confronting the Persians and left the defence of the Holy Land to client Arab kings in much the same way as the western empire had left the defence of Britain, Germany and France to client kings in the Fifth Century when the Roman empire in the West was hard pressed by Germanic tribes from the north.

Nothing is so unbecoming to the prestige of an empire as being unable to defend client nations. Just as the western kings had declared independence in the fifth century so

the Arab kings also declared independence from Byzantium in the seventh. To underline their independence they started minting coins showing the personage of the Arab kings displaying prominent Christian crosses, though with Arabic, rather than Greek inscriptions. Until this time minting coins was the exclusive province of the crown and coins had always shown the head of the Byzantine Roman emperor.

## **The Advent of Islam**

The names of these kings are not known but then emerged an Arab governor of Syria who is well known to history. Mu'Awiyia ("the weeping one" in Arabic) was the first Arabic leader to appear on the stage of the known world. It was the custom at the time to take pseudonyms such as "the weeping one" since without knowledge of the real name a malignant spell could not be cast. As governor he renovated Roman baths at Gadara in northern Palestine that had fallen into disrepair and, as was the custom, left an inscription which commenced with a Christian cross and stated that as a "slave of God" he had ordered the renovation of the baths in the "42<sup>nd</sup> year of the Arabs". The next person of note was Abd al-Malik (Malik means King in Arabic) who, according to tradition, built the Dome of the Rock on what was thought to be the site of the second Jewish temple in Jerusalem. This hexagonal building covered with Arab inscriptions is said to be the most beautiful as well as the most debated building in the world. The original building has been damaged by earthquakes many times and repaired. The present building was completely re-tiled by Suleiman the Magnificent in the sixteen century and carries a polemic against the Christian Doctrine of the Trinity, referring to the "praised (or chosen) one" who was the servant and messenger of God.

The Arabic word for "the praised one" is Muhammad and traditionally is said to refer to an Arab merchant from the town of Mecca who had received revelation from God via the Archangel Gabriel. It was revealed to him that he was, in fact, the final prophet before Doomsday and was instructed to return the religion of the Jews and the Christians, which they had corrupted, to a strictly Monotheistic religion. This latest version of the Abrahamic monotheistic religion became known as Islam -an Arabic word meaning submission (to God). Some scholars have pointed out, however, that the inscriptions on the Dome of the Rock could just as easily be referring to the Arian (anti-trinitarian) description of Jesus.

The traditional Muslim version of events is that the Prophet Muhammad became a powerful political, military and religious figure, unifying the warring Arab tribes until an untimely death. His forces then swept up into Palestine and routed Roman forces which had moved down in defence. There are fragments of several dated Christian documents which refer to the "Arabs of Muhammad" occupying the Holy Land which support this view though reference to an Arab Holy Book, later known as the Qur'an, is missing.

† ΕΠΙ ΑΒΔΑΛΜΑΛΑΝΙΑΛΑΜΗΡΑ  
 ΑΛΜΘΜΕΝΗΝΑΠΕΛΥΘΗΚΣΑΝΕ  
 ΝΕΩΘΗΟΚΛΙΒΑΝΟCΤΩΝΕΝΤΑΝ  
 ΘΑΔΙΑΑΒΔΑΛΛΑΝΙΘΑΒΘΑCΕΜΘ  
 CΥΜΒΘΛΘΕΝΜΗΝΗΔΕΚΕΜΒΡΙΩ  
 ΠΕΜΠΤΗΗΜΕΡΑΔΕΥΤΕΡΑΙΝΔ΄S  
 ΕΤΘCΤΗCΚΟΛΩΝΉCΚΥΚΑΤΑΑΡΑΒΑ  
 ΕΤΘCΜΒΕΙCΙΑCΗΝΤΩΝΝΟCΘΝ  
 ΤΩΝCΠΘΔΗΙΩΑΝΝΘΜΓΑΔΑΡΗΝΘ

Inscription by Mu'awiya on the baths at Gadara following the “era of the Arabs”

As with the Jewish belief in the history of the Great Kings and the Christian belief in the Divine Sacrifice redeeming humanity, it doesn't matter, from the perspective of political history, whether these beliefs are grounded in fact. What matters is whether persons believed them to be and acted on that belief. Islam was very successful in the Arab world and its much simplified theology was very attractive to many Christians who thereby avoided the endless controversies of Christology. Islam had great appeal to other groups as well with mass conversions of previously pagan tribes.

Four hundred years after the establishment of the Arabic Empire, central Asian Turkic people invaded Anatolia, converted to Islam and established the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum. In 1065 the Turks captured Jerusalem, some 3000 Christians and Muslims were massacred and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was destroyed. Christian pilgrims were often attacked, robbed or enslaved on the way to Jerusalem. These events caused great indignation in the West and resulted in the series of Holy Wars known as the Crusades, launched by Pope Urban II in 1095 in an effort to retake the sacred Christian sites in Jerusalem. The First Crusade was initially successful though marred by another massacre, this time of Muslims, when Jerusalem was recaptured. The Christian kingdom lasted until 1291 when the last stronghold of Acre fell to the Muslims. The Seljuk Turks made further inroads on the Byzantine Empire until themselves being supplanted by another Turkish group under Uthman I who founded what became known as the Ottoman Empire. The city of Constantinople was finally conquered by Mehmed II in 1453. The Ottoman Empire lasted until 1918 and included the area now known as Palestine. This word was not used by the Ottomans who named their administrative districts (vilayets) for the towns where the governors had their headquarters, being in the case of Palestine; Beirut, Damascus and Jerusalem.

## The Modern Era

Until the early 19th century, Palestine was a sparsely populated area, neglected by both the Ottomans and the West. With the increased wealth and education in Europe, however, interest in the area was rekindled. In 1865 the Palestine Exploration Fund was established in the United Kingdom to facilitate archeological research in the Holy Land. Palestine was surveyed in 1874 by the Royal Engineers, led by Lieutenant H Herbert Kitchener- later to become Field Marshall Earl Kitchener- and reliable maps

produced. Steamships and railways allowed pilgrims and archeologists much easier access and thousands visited the sacred sites every year.

There had been a great revival of religious feeling, especially in Great Britain, as a response to the Age of Reason of the 18th century which was felt to have caused the chaos of the French Revolution. The British had an unspoken affiliation with the Holy Land, believing themselves to be especially favoured by God as indicated by their great success in the 19th century. The Anglican bishopric of Jerusalem was established in 1843. “At Heaven’s Command” the Royal Navy ruled the waves, maintained freedom of the seas and suppressed the slave trade. Prime Minister David Lloyd-George later stated that he knew the history of the Israelite Kings better than that of the Kings and Queens of Britain itself. Other European nations also took a new interest in the area. The French felt they had a “Mission Historique” in the Holy Land dating back to the Crusades and German scholars were pioneers in the new field of scientific Biblical exegesis.

Jerusalem became part of the imperial competition between the rival European powers. Russia saw herself as the “Third Rome”- with the fall of Rome then Constantinople she felt herself to be the rightful leader of Christianity and therefore had special rights to the area. The Russians also saw themselves as protectors of the Orthodox Christians and their churches in Jerusalem and of the thousands of Russian pilgrims who flocked to the Holy Land. The French, who also had undergone a religious revival in the wake of the French Revolution and then the establishment of the Second Empire, sought to be protectors of the Catholics as did the Austro-Hungarians who claimed to be successors to the Holy Roman Empire. Both the Russians and Austrians used the old Roman double headed eagle as their emblem to signify their claim to be the rightful successors to Rome. The greatly increased interest in Jerusalem and the virtual reclamation of the Holy Sites by Christians protected by the Great Powers of Europe aroused millenarian enthusiasm in American Protestants who felt the Second Coming of Jesus must be to hand with thousands of pilgrims and tourists, including Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain) making the journey. European colonies were established around Jerusalem, many persons electing to retire (and die) near the Holy sites. Christian missionaries began work in the Holy Land, seeking converts as well as setting up schools and hospitals. The Syrian Protestant College (later renamed the American University of Beirut) was founded in 1866.

## **Zionism**

The word Zion (Hebrew “commemoration”) refers to Jerusalem itself or more precisely to a hill in that city. The term Zionism is of late origin, being first used by Nathan Birbbaum in 1885 to describe a movement seeking to reestablish a homeland for Jews in the country of their origin Judea (Palestine) then part of the Ottoman Empire. Jews had lived in Jerusalem since early Christian times, there being 7120 Jewish inhabitants in the census of 1844, compared with 5760 Muslims and 3390 Christians. The great Jewish Philanthropist Sir Moses Montefiore, who had become famous for, among other things, loaning money to the British Government to compensate plantation owners and allow abolition of slavery in the British Empire, strongly supported the Jewish community in Palestine. His correspondence with the British Consul in Damascus in 1841-1842 is regarded as virtually initiating the Zionist

movement. It wasn't until the middle of the nineteenth century, however, that the movement for Jews to migrate to Palestine gained much support. It was the time of the Romantic Era and the rise of nationalism in Europe with many peoples such as the Czechs clamouring for recognition of their national identity. In 1853, just prior to the Crimean War, Earl Shaftesbury, a "Christian Zionist" and Tory parliamentarian, wrote to the British Prime Minister urging establishment of a Jewish home in Palestine. He wrote of a "nation without a country for a country without a nation" (usually given as "a people without a country...") which would provide a friendly state to assist in warding off Russian expansionism and fulfill religious requirements for a Second Coming of Jesus.

There also continued to be pogroms against the Jews in Russia whenever there were difficult times or the Russian Empire faced a military defeat. Russia considered herself to be the "Third Rome", holding the flame of Orthodox Christianity aloft after the fall of Rome then Constantinople, and as such was favoured by God. How then to explain the defeats and relative backwardness of Imperial Russia? Obviously something was displeasing to God: it must be that Russia was allowing Jews to live in their midst. Jews also attracted disfavor by their different manner of dress and customs and by their obvious success in Russian society. Jews made up only four percent of the Russian population but were vastly over represented in industry especially vodka distillation and sugar refining as well as in finance, the arts, law and medicine. In the 1880's, after the Russian defeat in the Crimean War and the conditions imposed on Russia by the Berlin Congress after the Russo-Turk war of 1878, as well as the assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1881, many Jews were forced to flee Russia. Most went to the United States but a group of Jews from the Ukraine petitioned the Ottoman Sultan to be allowed to set up Jewish settlements in Palestine. The first group of the "Bilu"-( a Hebrew acronym derived from a verse in Isaiah (2:5) and whose aim was to set up agricultural settlements in Palestine) left Kharkov and arrived in Syria in 1882. The movement to settle in Palestine gained momentum in the aftermath of the Dreyfus Affair in France. Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a French army officer of Alsatian Jewish background, was wrongly convicted of treason in 1894 and transported to the penal colony of Devil's Island. The real culprit was found to be a Major Ferdinand Esterhazy but the French army attempted to suppress evidence of his guilt. "L'affaire Dreyfus" reopened bitter divisions in French society, suppressed since the Paris Commune. Theodore Herzl, a rather secular Hungarian Jew who didn't even have his sons circumcised, was dismayed at the display of popular anti-Semitism in France, supposed to be the most liberal of European countries and at the election of the very popular and publicly (though not privately) anti-Semitic mayor of Vienna, Dr Karl Lueger. In his book "The Jewish State", published in 1896, Herzl promoted the view that despite the best efforts of the Jews to fit into mainstream society, the "Jewish Problem" was insoluble in Europe and the only way out was the establishment of a separate Jewish home, preferably in Palestine. Many Christians also supported the idea of a return of the Jews to Palestine, believing this would hasten the Second Coming of Jesus.

On the other hand, many prominent Jews opposed the idea of a separate Jewish home, feeling this would lead to further anti-Semitism at home and promoted the idea of full assimilation. The prominent Australian Jew, Sir Isaac Isaacs, who had previously served as the first Australian born Governor-General stated “The honour of Jews throughout the world demands the renunciation of political Zionism”. Edwin Montagu, a member of the British Cabinet during World War I, was also very opposed to the idea of Zionism, feeling that Judaism was simply a religion and that Zionism would open Jews in his position to the charge of divided loyalties. Other more Orthodox Jews also opposed idea of a re-established Judea on the grounds that this should not occur until the Messiah returned to establish it himself. Even today a radical US Jewish group- “The Guardians of the City”- parade with banners reading “Existence of Israel: A Rebellion against G-D”.

The pogroms in Russia, anti-Semitism in Europe and the romantic idea of a re-established home for the Jews did lead to several waves of migration (referred to by the Hebrew name of aliyah- lit. ascent) of Jews to Palestine. The First Aliyah (1882-1903) followed the pogroms in Russia with the largest and best known being the Fifth Aliyah consisting of refugees from the Nazis in the 1930’s. Many of these migrants were middle class professionals who found the manual agricultural work very difficult. Despite introducing modern European farming methods which greatly increased the productivity of the land, the early settlements required the financial support of Zionist organisations around the world as well as the generous backing of several, though not all, members of the powerful Rothschild family of bankers.

Though all Zionists proposed the idea of a Jewish state, preferably in Palestine, they did not share a single ideology. Labor Zionism originated in Eastern Europe and was the dominant movement from the later part of the 19th century, through the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, until the defeat of the Israeli Labor Party in the elections of 1977. It espoused a collective, socialist view of Israeli society. Many of its members were Jews only by ethnic background and were often atheists or who advocated a very liberal interpretation of Judaism. As such, the movement was often at loggerheads with those who followed a more Orthodox view of Judaism. Liberal Zionism advocated a democratic, private enterprise based society and was a major force in the late 19th century though was somewhat eclipsed by the socialists after the First World War. Finally, Orthodox Zionists wished to return to Israel to be free to follow traditional Jewish practices. Many of their adherents continued to wear clothing from 18th century Polish ghettos, were very exclusionist and tried to insist that all Jews who were reluctant to follow them were not really Jews at all.

The purpose of the proposed state was also highly contested. Was it to be a state for Jews, ie simply a place where Jews could feel safe, or was it to be a Jewish State- a nation dedicated to reviving the Hebrew language and where Jewish culture and customs would be dominant? The father of modern Zionism, Theodore Herzl, seemed

to espouse the former. So much so that when the British Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain offered an area in the British Colony of Uganda as a Jewish homeland in 1903, Herzl was inclined to accept it as a “temporary night shelter”, almost as if he foresaw the great Nazi program of the 1940’s. In the end, and after some acrimonious debate at the 6th Zionist Conference in Basel, the offer was politely declined.

The dichotomy of views was typified by the contest for dominance of the Zionist movement in the first part of the 20th Century between the leader of the Labor Zionists, David Gruen- usually known by his Hebrew name of David Ben-Gurion - and the leader of the “Revisionist” Zionists, Ze’ev (born Vladimir) Jabotinsky. Ben-Gurion wished for a non-theocratic state where Jews and Arabs would have equal status but which would be based on a Jewish working class. From this philosophy came the collectivist kibbutz (Hebrew for “gathering”) first founded by Russian emigrants in the late 19th Century. Jabotinsky initially espoused a liberal state based loosely on the British Imperial model; in fact Jabotinsky was holder of the MBE for heroism when part of the British army in the First World War. A draft constitution for a Jewish state which he wrote in 1934 called for full equality for resident Arabs. He later moved somewhat to the right and though always declared himself not to be a Fascist, this label was often used by his enemies. Jabotinsky was an inspired speaker who was the object of a leadership cult which he did nothing to discourage. He spoke of the citizens of the Jewish state as being able to move as one, “like a machine”, which sounded close to the Fascist ideal. He set up a training camp in Fascist Italy and lived there himself until he had to leave after Mussolini’s shameful and disastrous pact with the Nazis. The mutual antagonism between the socialist, secular Labor movement and the more conservative, religious parties continues to divide the Israeli community much more than does antagonism between adherents of a left and right view of politics in the Anglo-Saxon world.

### **The Arab Awakening**

Traditionally Islam divides the world into two states; Believers and non-Believers, and as such, nation states are considered artificial Western ideas. In the Ottoman Empire persons thought of themselves as Muslim (or Christians or Jews) with the ethnic background of the person being considered of much less importance. It is not surprising therefore that the most prominent persons to espouse the importance of an Arab, rather than a Turk, identity tended to be Christian Arabs. One such was Nasif Al-Yaziji (1800-1871) who taught at the Syrian Protestant College and sought to reestablish the style of classical Arabic writers and was instrumental in rediscovering the literary heritage of the Arabs. Negib Azouri, another Christian Arab, edited the journal “L’Independence Arabe” in Paris before the First World War. His pamphlet “Program of the League of the Arab Fatherland”, published in 1905, called for an Arab Empire and was prepared to offer the throne to a member of the Egyptian royal family though did not include Egypt in the plan. Also in Paris in the early part of the twentieth century, Michel Aflaq, a Christian Arab student who had become

disillusioned with the continuing French presence in the Middle East, founded the Ba'ath (Renaissance) Party which was heavily influenced by the European Fascist movement and was to play a major role in the politics of both Syria and Iraq.

Many European Orientalists encouraged the establishment of a separate and unified Arab world. Wilfred Blunt, in particular, in the later 19th century became famous in Britain for his literary advocacy of a separate Arab nation and was joined by many German and French writers. The movement was summarised by the Christian Arab George Antonius in his very influential, though rather romanticised book, "The Arab Awakening" published in 1938. The respected cultural philosopher, Edward Said (1935-2003), best known for his book "Orientalism", was a US citizen of Palestinian Christian background.

It wasn't only Christians or Europeans who dreamed of a cultural renaissance in the Muslim world. Egypt, a province of the Ottoman Empire, had been shocked by the ease with which Napoleon had conquered the country in 1798. Reformist rulers such as Muhammad Ali (1769-1849), an Albanian soldier who proclaimed himself Khedive (Viceroy) of Egypt instituted dramatic changes in military and economic spheres. The printing press was introduced to Egypt in 1821 and a professional bureaucracy was established. The Arabic language itself was reformed and Modern Standard Arabic was introduced throughout the Arabic world. Several influential Egyptian Islamic scholars strove to reconcile the reformist movement with traditional Islamic teachings. Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-1897) made bold attacks on traditional interpretations of Islam and called for Pan-Islamic unity in the face of an increasingly stronger and more confident Europe. Qasim Amin (1863-1908), one of the founders of Cairo University, used quotations from the Qur'an to support the evolution of society and the liberation of women.

Other Islamic scholars took a radically different approach, feeling that the decline in the Muslim world was due to a lack of diligence being paid by Muslims to the demands of their religion. Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949) founded the Muslim Brotherhood in Cairo with the aim of reestablishing an Islamic Caliphate which would be firmly based on Islamic ideals and would be diametrically opposed to the secular societies of the West. The Brotherhood had a very aggressive, attacking attitude and stated that a military expedition be sent against the unbelievers once or twice a year and that all true Muslims must assist, it being "an obligation from Allah on every Muslim which cannot be evaded or ignored". The Palestinian Islamist party Hamas (an acronym of the "Islamic Resistance Movement" in Arabic) is an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Egyptians regarded themselves as leaders of the Arabic world and of the Arabic revival, though strictly speaking are of Berber rather than Arabic origin. In their efforts to modernise society in the 19th century, enormous debts had been incurred by the Egyptian government; a situation not assisted by the ongoing presence of the old

Ottoman custom of financial corruption. In the best banking tradition, the lenders, in the main Britain, intervened to sort things out and sent an invasion force which easily defeated the Egyptian army and occupied Egypt in 1882. Lord Cromer, of the Baring's banking family, was a gifted financial administrator and quickly improved the tax system and reduced public debt. The British colonial administration may have had its problems, (mainly one of arrogance) but it was not corrupt. The memorial to Lord Cromer in Westminster Abbey states that he "regenerated Egypt". The Egyptians didn't see it like that and there was a saying at the time, "We'd rather be ruled badly by Egyptians than well by the British".

The movement to Arab independence was hastened by reforms in the Ottoman Empire. Concerned that the rapprochement between Britain and the Russian Empire in 1907- in the face of rising German power- would disadvantage the Ottomans and distressed by the general backwardness of the Ottoman Empire, a group of army officers carried out a bloodless coup in 1908. This Committee of Union and Progress, the CUP, (usually referred to as "The Young Turks") brought in a program which sounded good on the surface, promising as it did equality of all races and religions, but which, in fact, called for the "Turkification" of all society to the detriment of Arab culture and language. Some Arab intellectuals became alarmed at the potential for loss of Arab culture and influence but most Arabs remained loyal to the CUP, fearing that a breakup of the Ottoman Empire would deliver them into the hands of the British, the dominant European power in the region, or even worse, the French. The French had annexed the previously Ottoman province of Algeria and ruled it with a very firm hand.

Meanwhile, the Arabian peninsula, sometimes referred to as "Arabia Felix"- meaning land to the right of Mecca- was, in the days before the discovery of oil, off the European radar. Mecca, itself was in the hands of the Sharif Hussein- the title meaning "Protector" in Arabic (of the Muslim holy sites). Hussein was of the House of Hashem, indicating descent from the Prophet Muhammad, giving him considerable prestige in the Muslim world. Despite this ancestry, his position was threatened by an Arab tribal leader Abdul Aziz, usually known as Ibn Saud, who was supported by a fundamentalist Islamic sect known for its founder as Wahhabism. To strengthen his position against the Saudis, Sharif Hussein approached Britain, the major European power in the area, for assistance. This arrangement, whereby a great power assists one side to victory in a civil war has been seen many times in history and results in the victor in the civil war becoming the vassal of the great power. In fact, in this way the Romans took Palestine and the English came to Ireland. The British, however, who at the time did not want to alienate the Ottomans even more than they had by their dominance of the theoretically still Ottoman province of Egypt, declined this advance. In fact the British Indian Office, which regarded Arabia as in their sphere of influence, recommended the British throw their support behind the Saudis instead.

Jewish settlers continued to trickle into the Holy Land with continuing friction between the newcomers with their different languages, manner of dress and customs, and the resident Arabs. A problem not aided by religious prejudices with the Jews regarding themselves as “Gods chosen” and viewing the Arabs as followers of a false prophet as well as the tendency of the Jews to view the Arab labourers on Jewish estates as uncultured, backward natives. The opinions of the Arabs were influenced by the several adverse descriptions of the Jews in their Holy Book, the Qur’an.

The Mufti of Jerusalem, Taher Amin al-Husseini, the father of the future leader of the Palestinian people, in 1899 petitioned the Sultan to put a stop to the Jewish migration. Though the Porte (a contraction of “The Sublime Porte” - the Ottoman government) did restrict migration, the Ottoman Empire was riddled with corruption and bribes could usually circumvent any government decree. The mayor of Jerusalem, also in 1899, tried a more tactful approach. In a letter to the Chief Rabbi of Paris he stated that though the Zionist idea was fine in theory “who can challenge the rights of the Jews to Palestine?”, he foresaw only conflict and asked that the Jews leave the Arabs in peace and consider establishing a Jewish home elsewhere. Hertzl replied that the Jews were not a warlike people and with their advanced knowledge and finances their presence would advantage all the inhabitants of Palestine.

## **The First World War**

The next turning point in Arab nationalism was the outbreak of the First World War. The Ottomans elected to side with Germany and Austro-Hungary against Britain, France and the Russian Empire, hoping that a German victory would see them reclaim Egypt from the British and areas to the north of Turkey which had been lost to the Russians. Ottoman forces with German advisers moved west from Palestine to threaten the Suez Canal which was controlled by the British who saw it as a lifeline vital to the Empire. Australian forces had landed in Egypt before taking part in the landing at Gallipoli. With the failure of that campaign, Australian infantry units moved to France while the mounted units joined the British campaign to capture Palestine from the Ottomans.

## **The Hussein- McMahon Correspondence**

With the declaration of war, Britain simply annexed Egypt, which up to then had been legally a province of the Ottoman Empire even if the British had been administering it. The High Commissioner, Sir Henry McMahon, recalling the advances made to the British by Sharif Hussein of Mecca, now renewed the correspondence. In a much studied series of letters, he offered to support Hussein financially and politically if Hussein raised a rebellion of the Arabs against the Ottoman Empire. Hussein replied demanding British assistance against his Arab opponents as well as against the Ottomans and assurance that the British wouldn’t simply annex Arab land as they had

Egypt. McMahon pledged support for an Arab nation but reserved that portion of the Ottoman lands west of Damascus, by which the British said (later) they meant Palestine and Lebanon, as well as the southern part of what is now Iraq -to protect British economic interests- and what is now Syria which they felt was in the French sphere of influence. These reservations were unacceptable to Sharif Hussein and the correspondence ended in early 1916.

### **The Arab Revolt**

The Ottoman forces in the Middle East, however, were a huge burden for the population to bear. The young men had been conscripted into the army and the land was not being worked. In a country where subsistence farming resulted in little surplus being available at the best of times this meant famine, and it is estimated that a quarter of all inhabitants of Syria perished. There was much discontent which the Turkish governor met by publicly hanging some twenty two Arab intellectuals. There was outrage among the Arabs and Sharif Hussein was virtually forced to declare for the British and call for an Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire before some other Arab took the leadership role for himself. Hussein was also desperately short of money since the war had dramatically decreased the number of pilgrims visiting the sacred sites of Mecca and Medina, the source of most of the revenue of the kingdom. The famine played into British hands in recruitment of Arab volunteers as well. Though the romantic image is one of the Arabs supporting Hussein in his revolt for ideological reasons, the main attraction was the food and money supplied by the British. "Saint George's Cavalry" (so-called because the gold sovereigns that the Arabs insisted on being paid with depicted St George on the reverse side) rode at the side of anti-Ottoman forces.

The Arab campaign against the Turks raged for a further two years. The British supplied arms, money and advisers including the legendary T E Lawrence. Sharif Hussein sent his son, Emir Feisal, (played in the film "Lawrence of Arabia" by Sir Alec Guinness), to lead the Arab forces who were to play a major role in the successful British campaign to drive the Turks out of Palestine. The Australian Light Horse were the first to reach Damascus but waited until Emir Feisal arrived to symbolically take the city from the Turks and set up a provisional government there.

### **The Sykes- Picot Agreement**

The Allies in the war, Britain, France and Russia all had interests in the Middle East and sought to claim spheres of influence in the event of an Ottoman defeat. Britain wished to claim the oil rich parts of what is now Iraq and to have control over the southern part of Ottoman territory ( the area that now consists of Southern Israel and Jordan ) to provide a corridor to the Suez Canal and their protectorate of Egypt. The French felt that the area of what is now Syria should belong to them and the Russians,

as the “Third Rome”, were keen to protect the Christian religious sites in the Holy Land. An agreement was negotiated in London in 1915 by the British Orientalist Sir Mark Sykes and the French diplomat Francois Georges-Picot. Interestingly it was Sir Mark Sykes who had designed the flag used during the Arab revolt and which is now used for the proposed state of Palestine. It was composed of 3 horizontal stripes, black for the Abbasid, Green for the Fatamid and white for Umayyad dynasties with a red triangle on the pole side to represent the Hashemite dynasty of Hussein and is the basis for most of the flags in use in Arab countries today. Sykes and colleagues also drew on classical scholarship to re-introduce the terms “Palestine”, “Syria”, “Mesopotamia” and “Iraq” into the political discourse. Sykes himself was inheritor of a vast northern English estate and thus independently very wealthy but rather than live the life of an English gentleman he elected to serve the Empire. He possessed a brilliant if rather erratic mind and it was said that he could have made a success of half a dozen careers being a very engaging speaker, an author of several well received travelogues published while he was in his twenties as well as being a cartoonist of newspaper standard. During World War I he was an expert assistant on Eastern matters to the British war cabinet and as such was instrumental in the formulation of the Balfour Declaration- becoming known as the “Godfather” to the state of Israel though he frequently expressed anti-Jewish views. He was a “liberal imperialist” who believed the British Empire to be a force for good in the world and in his opinion the British were needed in the Middle East and that the Arabs needed ten years of “tutelage” to be a great nation and that without this help there would be only chaos and poverty. The treaty he and Picot devised divided the Ottoman Middle East between Britain and France, leaving the Holy Land under combined Allied control. The McMahon letters alluded to this but the treaty was kept secret and though Sharif Hussein and Emir Feisal were aware of it, their troops were not, and there was considerable anger when the treaty was made public by the Bolshevik government after the overthrow of the Russian Provisional Government. Colonel Lawrence even used the threat of a French takeover to urge the Arabs on to Damascus before the French could get there. Privately Emir Feisal stated that he was ready to acknowledge French and British influence in Syria if the Allies would support his dynasty against the Saudis in Arabia. World opinion and especially pressure from the United States, however, forced the British, with the reluctant agreement of the French, to issue a further statement in early 1918 which they said abrogated the Sykes-Picot Treaty and which assured Allied support of Arab independence. This Anglo-French Declaration stated that these Allies promised "the complete and final liberation of the peoples who have for so long been oppressed by the Turks, and the setting up of national governments and administrations deriving their authority from the free exercise of the initiative and choice of the indigenous populations."

### **The Balfour Declaration**

Towards the end on 1917 the outcome of the First World War was in the balance. On the Allied side the Russians had sued for peace, allowing the Germans to move one

million men to reinforce their Western Front and the French army had mutinied and was of doubtful reliability, but, on the other hand, the United States had entered the war on the side of Britain and France. On the side of the Central Powers, Germany's major ally, the Austro-Hungarian army was disintegrating. The outcome could go either way. According to the memoirs of British Prime Minister David Lloyd-George, the British decided it would be useful to gain favor with world Jewish opinion, especially in the United States where support for the war was marginal and many Jews were of German origin, but hopefully to also influence Jews in Germany and Austro-Hungary. This view may not have been the full story since it has been pointed out that a declaration in support of Jewish resettlement in Palestine under British protection had been mooted for years. In the mid nineteenth century Britain had looked favourably on a friendly Jewish state in Palestine as a counter to growing Russian influence in the area. In 1853, just prior to the Crimean War, Lord Shaftesbury wrote of a "a country without a nation" (Palestine) in need of a "nation without a country" and spoke of "the ancient and rightful lords of the soil, the Jews". The influence of Jews in other parts of the world in support of Zionism was also grossly overstated since those Jews in positions of power were anti-Zionist almost to the man. A declaration in sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations, however, was strongly supported by Professor Chaim Weizmann, a Russian Polish Jew by birth and a brilliant chemist who had devised a method of obtaining acetone, necessary for the manufacture of explosives, without the need for wood alcohol which was scarce in Britain and France, (though not in Germany). Weizmann was possessed of a charming manner as well as a brilliant mind, though tended to overstate the influence of international Jewry to advance his cause. He told Balfour that the Jews had Jerusalem when "London was still a marsh". Since the British government was deeply indebted to him and he also happened to live in Balfour's constituency, he was able to persuade Balfour to draft the document of declaration and steer it through Cabinet with the assistance of Sir Mark Sykes who took part in War Cabinet meetings involving the Middle East. The declaration is so important to the history of Palestine that it is worth quoting it in full. It was in the form of a letter addressed to Baron Rothschild, a leader of the British Jewish community.

Foreign Office  
November 2nd, 1917

Dear Lord Rothschild:

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

His Majesty's Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors 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.

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

Yours,  
Arthur James Balfour

The declaration carefully avoids calling for a Jewish state and the clause protecting rights of non-Jewish communities was added at the urging of Sir Herbert Samuel, a liberal Jew who was concerned, rightly so as it turned out, about repercussions for Jews then living in predominately Muslim countries. The declaration is still celebrated by “Balfour Day” in Jewish communities though Balfour himself was to write later that he had “never been able to understand how it can be harmonized with” the other declarations made by the Allies to the Arabs.

## **The Peace after the Great War**

With the defeat of the Ottomans, the Allies held the lands of the former Empire by “Right of Conquest” (which remained a legal right until 1974 when proscribed by a United Nations resolution.) The United States under President Wilson, however, had called for self-determination of all peoples. The Paris Peace Conference in 1919 attempted to sort out these conflicting aims. Chaim Weizmann led the Zionist representation and Emir Feisal, son of the Sharif of Mecca, (now known as the King of the Hejaz), with the assistance of Colonel Lawrence, the Arab side. Weizmann and Feisal actually got on very well and on January 3rd 1919 published a joint declaration of mutual support. It stated in the preamble that “the surest means of working out the consummation of their national aspirations is through the closest possible collaboration in the development of the Arab State and Palestine” (Palestine at that time referred to the Jewish area) and Article IV “All necessary measures shall be taken to encourage and stimulate immigration of Jews into Palestine on a large scale...”. Furthermore Emir Feisal wrote to Chief Justice Felix Frankfurter of the American Zionist Association in March 1919 and stated “we will wish the Jews a most hearty welcome home”. He felt that there was “room in Syria for us both” and “neither can be a real success without the other”. Feisal had, however, added a reservation to his welcome; success of Arab aspirations in Syria where he was to be king. Instead the French were given the Mandate for Syria and Feisal withdrew his support and claimed not to even remember signing such a document.

Despite the well wishes of Emir Feisal, it seemed that the majority of Arabs did not want large scale Jewish immigration to Palestine. President Wilson sent a commission under Henry King and Charles Crane to report on the wishes of the people. Unfortunately the Paris Peace Conference had essentially finished work by the time the King-Crane Commission published its findings in 1922. It called for limited

Jewish migration and that the United States be the Mandatory Power to guide the peoples to self-determination, but was too late: at the San Remo Conference in 1920, Britain and France had worked out a settlement between themselves already. Britain was to be awarded a Mandate for Mesopotamia (Iraq and Palestine) and France the Mandate for Syria. The Syrians, in an effort to forestall such a move had already declared independence with Feisal as head of state and the French needed to use armed force to depose the newly appointed King and placed Syria under direct French rule. The British did not oppose this- “France is worth a thousand Syrias” said British Prime Minister David Lloyd-George.

## The British Mandate

After King Feisal was expelled from the Syrian throne in Damascus, the British moved to establish him as King of that part of the British Mandate now know as Iraq. The gifted British orientalist Gertrude Bell assisted the King to gain acceptance among the other member tribes of Iraq and also was instrumental in setting up the Iraqi Archeological Museum. She is said to be one of the few British Imperial agents remembered well by the Arabs. Feisal’s younger brother Abdullah had been earmarked to rule Iraq and was now without a throne. He gathered warrior tribesmen to threaten the French in Syria. Winston Churchill, then British Colonial Secretary, met Abdullah and persuaded him to accept instead the throne of the Eastern part of the British Mandate of Palestine to be known as the Kingdom of the Transjordan. Churchill was later to boast that he had created a kingdom in an afternoon. The large triangular salient made by Saudi Arabia into the eastern part of Jordan being known as “Winston’s hiccup”.



British Mandate

Meanwhile King Hussein of the Hejaz (the western coastal strip of Arabia that includes Mecca and Medina) declared himself “King of the Arabs” as well as Caliph to all Muslims. This threatened the hoped for stability of the region and the British withdrew their support, allowing Hussein’s old enemies, the Saudis, to take Mecca

and for the Saudi leader Abdul-Azziz (known as Ibn-Saud) to declare himself King of the Hejaz. This was later united in 1935 with the Kingdom of Nejd in the south to form the “Kingdom of Saudi-Arabia”. The Saudis never forgot the indirect support of the British and promised not to move against the British while the Mandate remained in place. This was to prove important in the 1930’s and 40’s during the Second World War and the troubles in Palestine. Indeed, the British and Saudi Royal Families continue to share a close relationship as evidenced recently by the fabulous “Rainbow Collection” of jewelery given as a wedding gift to Prince William and Kate Middleton.

The British now had a difficult if not impossible task. The Mandate from the League of Nations specifically charged Britain with fulfilling the obligations of the Balfour Declaration but Britain still had an empire which included large numbers of Muslims, some 400,000 of whom had volunteered to fight for Britain during the Great War with four Indian Muslim soldiers winning the Victoria Cross in France and Belgium. The Mandate was also supposed to “prepare the Arabs for self-government” but many felt the British would suppress Arab nationalism until the Jews made up a majority in Palestine then just leave. In an attempt to clarify the situation, Churchill then Foreign Minister of the British Government, issued a White Paper in 1922 which summarised the various agreements entered into by the British Government including the McMahon-Hussein correspondence, the Sykes-Picot Treaty, the Balfour Declaration and the 1917 Anglo-French Declaration and stated that Jewish migration into Palestine would be limited by the capacity of the country to absorb them without disadvantaging the resident Arabs. This Paper didn’t reassure anyone. Zionists were especially unhappy when Churchill carved off much of Palestine to form the Kingdom of the Transjordan. Abdullah, king of this rather resource poor land, however, saw that the Jews were modernising Palestine and attracting international investment there. He invited the Zionists to consider settling in the Transjordan but the plan was vetoed by the British who thought they had enough troubles already.

The first High Commissioner appointed by the British was Sir Herbert Samuel, a prominent, if liberal, member of the British Jewish community. Needless to say the Arabs felt that this was a ploy by the British to increase the influence of the Jews in Palestine. Sir Herbert, mindful of this, was at great pains to be impartial as possible and appointed the ardent young Arab Nationalist Haj Amin al-Husseini as Grand Mufti of Jerusalem (a title the British invented). The Husseinis were one of the great Jerusalem Arab families- the name usually indicated descent from the Prophet through his grandson Hussein though in this case the name had been assumed several hundred years before. Husseinis had been an officer in the Ottoman army but served the British, his paymasters, reasonably well. He had rallied to the Allied side in the First World War and had been a British recruiting officer among Arab prisoners of war. He continued to serve the British after the war and was able to assist in keeping the peace, by for example, delivering a sermon against violence during the anti-Zionist riots of 1929: a stance which caused some Arab extremists to denounce the

Grand Mufti as an “infidel”. Husseini’s attitude to the British and the Zionists would greatly harden in the 1930’s and he was a leading figure in Palestine nationalism prior to and immediately after the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948. He spent much of World War II in Nazi Germany and assisted in recruiting Muslim volunteers for SS Division Handschar (Scimitar), seeing a German victory as essential in removing Jews from Palestine.

The Mandate from the League of Nations required the British to set up an organisation to coordinate Jewish activities in Palestine. This became the Jewish Agency, chaired initially by Chaim Weizmann and supported by many prominent Jews such as Albert Einstein, Sir Herbert Samuel and French politician Leon Blum. Weizmann was later criticised as being too pro-British and forced to step down. The British offered to set up a corresponding Arab Agency but this was rejected out of hand by the Arab leaders.

The irritation felt by the Arabs towards continued Jewish migration continued to fester and was exacerbated by the rise of National Socialism in Germany. When Hitler came to power in January 1933, one of his first moves was to dismiss Jews from universities and senior positions in the civil service. Some 24 Nobel Prize winners left Germany and Austria. Most of the dismissed academics and other distressed Jews migrated to the US or the Dominions of the British Empire but some attempted to get into Palestine. Amin al-Husseini led a Arab Higher Committee representing Muslim and Christian Arabs opposed to the increasing number of Jews. A general strike was called in 1936 by Grand Mufti al-Husseini and lasted in part until 1939-said to be the longest general strike in history. Arab guerrillas opened a campaign of sabotage and assassination against the British authorities and Jewish settlements and also terrorised Arabs who were not followers of Husseini, fire-bombing the businesses and even killing many of the desperate merchants who tried to break the strike. The uprising was vigorously suppressed by the British and by the end of the campaign some 6000 people had lost their lives from the British action but also from the savage internecine Arab conflict. The general strike was, as is usual with these actions, a two edged sword. As well as greatly demoralising the Palestinian Arab population with the viciousness of the struggle and the large death toll, many Arab businesses were bankrupted and farmers were evicted from their land for being unable to pay rent to absentee landowners. Jews were able to buy up land and business sites at bargain prices and the embittered families of victims of the Arab terror provided a fertile recruiting ground for Jewish intelligence. As part of their pacification program, the British built a series of 50 strong points, known as Tegart forts after their designer Sir Charles Tegart, throughout Palestine. These were to play an important role in the war of 1948 between the Jews and Arabs.

The increased number of Jews and the investment they were able to attract from overseas meant that the Jewish proportion of the economy increased even faster than their numbers. Between 1914 and 1948 the number of Jews increased from 85000 to

650000 compared with the Arab increase from 650000 to 1.3 million whereas the net domestic product of the Jews increased from 1.7 million pounds sterling to 38.5 million between 1922 and 1947 compared with the Arab community's increase from 6.6 million to 32.3 million pounds. The Arabs were unimpressed by the argument that the increased prosperity benefited them as well with a leading Palestinian moderate Musa al-Alami stating "I would rather the country remained impoverished and barren for another hundred years...". On the other hand, the relative prosperity of British Palestine and the availability of schools and hospitals set up by the Mandate authorities did mean that Palestine was an attractive place for Arabs as well as Jews and between 1921 and 1931, more Arabs than Jews chose to migrate and settle there.

Concerned by the instability and violence in the Mandate, in 1938 the British established another commission under Lord Peel to recommend a solution. The Arabs boycotted the commission though the Zionists did not and perhaps because of this the report was felt to be overly sympathetic to the Zionist cause. It called for partition with some twenty percent of the land reserved for the Jews in a boomerang shaped area to the north and northwest along the border with Lebanon. The larger part of Palestine was to join the Transjordan of King Abdullah while the British maintained control of Jerusalem with a corridor to the sea. The 300000 Arabs in the Jewish area were to be "relocated". Many of the Zionists were enthusiastic supporters of the plan though others felt the small area allotted to the Jews was insufficient and should have included virtually all of Palestine and even Transjordan. The report was also, understandably, bitterly opposed by the Arab Higher Committee.

Time, however, was moving on and war was looming. The British realised that the Jews would have to support or at least not oppose the coming fight with Hitler's Germany but the position of the Arabs was unclear to say the least. Just prior to the outbreak of World War II, in an effort to secure Arab support, the British handed down a White Paper on the future of Palestine as they saw it over the next ten years. The Paper essentially negated the Balfour Declaration and the follow on Peel Report. There would be no partition and migration of Jews would be severely restricted to 15000 persons per year to 1944 and after that only with Arab consent. It was now the turn for the Jews to be dismayed but they were powerless given the desperate situation of the Jews in Europe. The leader of the Jewish Agency, David Ben-Gurion stated "We will fight the White Paper as if there is no war, and the war as if there is no White Paper". As far as the Arabs were concerned, however, the British might as well not have bothered, an American newspaper opinion poll taken in 1941 revealed that almost 90% of the Palestinian Arabs supported an Axis victory.

## World War II

The Jewish militia Haganah (lit. “Defence” in Hebrew) was initially just a collection of farmers who armed themselves to protect outlying settlements from attacks by Arab gangs. With the 1929 anti-Zionist riots the Jews saw things were becoming more serious and moved to expand the Haganah, equip it with more modern weapons and train it along the lines of a regular army with the drill being modelled on that of the British army. Indeed many of the initial commanders had served with the British in the First World War. Ze’ev Jabotinsky, for example, was an officer in the Zion Mule Corps which landed on Gallipoli with the British forces. He later led the Jewish Legion which was under the overall command of Major General Chaytor of the ANZAC Mounted Division. He distinguished himself in an attack across the Jordan river against the Turks and was awarded the MBE for valor. David Ben-Gurion, future leader of the Jewish Agency and first Prime Minister of Israel, had also joined the Jewish Legion after the Balfour Declaration. The British administration of the Mandate did not recognise the Haganah but unofficially tolerated it and often the two co-operated as they did in opposing the Arab revolt of 1936 to 1939. Special Night Squads were raised of Jewish and British volunteers to actively counter Arab sabotage and ambush Arabs attacking kibbutzes at night. Colonel Orde Wingate, an ardent Christian who saw it as his duty to hasten the return of Christ with the reformation of a Jewish state, was very active in training the Night Squads. His overly partisan approach and his public call for the formation of a Jewish state was thought to compromise his position as a British officer and he was recalled to Britain though not before he had been awarded the DSO for his courage and leadership.

The 1929 riots had taken the Jews by surprise, seeming to come on a period of calm when it appeared that Jews and Arabs could live together as Weizmann and Feisal had hoped. The Jews moved to set up an intelligence gathering organisation so as to be forewarned of future attacks. The service was reorganised in 1949 to become the legendary Mossad (an acronym of the Hebrew “Institute for Intelligence and Special Operations”).

The Haganah was a defensive organisation from the outset and held to the doctrine of “the purity of arms” and refused to be involved in terrorist type attacks. Meanwhile Arab assassinations, kidnaps and bombings continued and, in 1931, a group of Jewish militants broke away from the Haganah to form a group which believed the best form of defence is attack. They took the name “The National Military Organisation in the Land of Israel”, (in Hebrew ‘Irgun Zevai Leumi’), usually referred to by the British as the “Irgun” though the Jews themselves referred to it as “Etzel”, an acronym of the Hebrew initials. They were inspired by Ze’ev Jabotinsky and his “Revisionist” Zionism (he called for a revision of the terms of the Mandate) and were accused of using the tactics of the Italian Blackshirts of Fascist Italy where Jabotinsky had lived. It was declared an illegal terrorist organisation by the government of the new state of

Israel in 1948. The Irgun, however, was to form the basis for the right wing parties which continue to play a major role in Israeli politics. The leader during World War II was Menachim Begin, later Prime Minister of Israel and, ironically holder of the Nobel Peace Prize for his signing of the Camp David Accords with the Egyptian Anwar Sadat. Begin was succeeded as Prime Minister of Israel by Yitshak Shamir who, during World War II, had been leader of the even more extremist organisation known by the British as the “Stern Gang” though referred to by the Jews as “Lehi” (the “h” pronounced like the “ch” in loch) an acronym of Lohamei Herut Israel - “Freedom Fighters of Israel”. Zaborinsky’s Irgun had declared a truce with the British for the duration of the war to concentrate on the common enemy, the Nazis. Avraham Stern, then a member of the Irgun High Command, decided that Britain and not Germany was the main obstacle to the formation of a Jewish state. He refused to hold to a truce with the British and even went so far as to try to make a deal with the Nazis themselves, offering to support them in their attacks on the British in return for allowing Jews to migrate to Israel from Nazi controlled Europe. His organisation was unashamedly terrorist in orientation and used Biblical tracts and historical precedents as justification for assassinations and bombings. Shamir was to argue, with some justification, that killing a handful of people paled into insignificance compared with, say, the dropping of the atomic bomb by the United States and was the only method available to a small group against a powerful enemy. An argument used by Arab terrorists today against Israel.

A further branch of Jewish armed force was the establishment in 1941 of a special forces group by the British themselves for use in case the Germans broke through the defences in Egypt and occupied Palestine itself. It took the name “Palmach”- an acronym of the Hebrew “Plugot Machatz” (lit. “Strike Force”)- and undertook several operations against the Vichy French forces in Syria in company with Australian and British forces. Several prominent Israeli soldiers such as Moshe Dyan and Yitshak Rabin (later assassinated while Prime Minister by a Jewish extremist) had been officers in this British force. After their victory at El-Alamein in 1943, the British officially disbanded the Palmach but, rather than stand down, it went underground and continued training, earning its keep by working half time on kibbutzes. By the end of the war some 2000 men and women were trained members of Palmach.

There was often tension between these factions of the Jewish forces. In 1944, Lehi (the Stern Gang) assassinated Lord Moyne, British Minister of State for the Middle East in Cairo. As well as being a much decorated hero of the First World War, he was head of the Guinness brewing family and a close friend of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. The Irgun was blamed and members of Haganah and especially Palmach were responsible for co-operating with the British in rounding up members of Irgun- an action known as the (Hunting) Season. Begin ordered his men not to retaliate to prevent a full blown civil war and the Season petered out. In the end, all the factions were united after the war to form the Jewish Resistance Movement,

though Lehi (the Stern Gang) and the Irgun often continued to pursue a separate course of action until after the 1948 war with the Arabs. The Resistance Movement was initially directed against the British but later these experienced warriors were to form the backbone of the Jewish armed forces.

During the war the Jewish Agency petitioned the British to establish an identifiably Jewish fighting unit but the British, fearing Arab reaction declined. Many Jews joined regular British army units but it was not until later in the war that the British Prime Minister Churchill, aware of the massacre of European Jews by the Nazis, ordered the formation of the Jewish Brigade which saw action in Italy in the final stages of the war. By the end of the war, some 30000 Palestinian Jews had served in the Brigade and other British Units, obtaining training which was to prove very useful in the coming war with the Arabs.

It wasn't only Jews who served with the British. The British had raised an Arab Army in the 1920's to maintain order among the tribes of the Transjordan and patrol the vital Jerusalem to Amman road. This force, always known to the British as the "Arab Legion", was paid for and officered by the British and by World War II had grown to 1600 men. From 1939, it was commanded by John Bagot Glubb and was essentially part of the British army during the war, being usefully engaged in the Syrian campaign against the Vichy French and the action against the pro-Axis Iraq insurgency. After the war it became the army of Jordan, though still commanded by British officers including Glubb and the famous Australian born soldier Colonel Hackett (later Sir John, commander of the British Army on the Rhine and well known author). By the 1948 the Legion had grown to be 6000 strong and proved to be the best trained and disciplined force on the Arab side in the war with the Jews.

Towards the end of World War II, the British could see that the time of their predominance in the region was drawing to a close. They prompted the members of their protectorates and previous French colonies to form a regional organisation so as to coordinate Arab policy and present a united front to the world. This organisation was established in March 1945 as the Arab League and initially consisted of six members; Egypt, Transjordan (Jordan after 1946), Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Saudi-Arabia. The League continued to grow and currently has 22 member states.

## **The End of the British Mandate**

The destruction of Jewish society in Europe by the Nazis during World War II meant that Zionist efforts to establish a separate Jewish homeland in Palestine were met with tremendous sympathy in the wider world. During World War II American Zionists, most of whom had relatives at least threatened by the Nazis, adopted the "Biltmore Program" which called on the British to rescind the White Paper and allow many more Jews to migrate to Palestine. With the end of the war, the true nature of the

Holocaust became clear and greatly increased the pressure on the Allies to support the Zionist program. Most Jews still wished to migrate to the US, Canada or Australia but these countries had restricted immigration policies. Australia held to its pre-war policy stated at the Evian Conference in France on refugees “we have no real racial problem, we are not desirous of importing one”. The Zionists also lobbied the victors of war to hinder the migration of Jews to any country but Palestine. For their part, the Arabs failed to see why they should pay for the sins of the Nazis and suggested that a state of the conquered Germany be cleared of Germans and the Jewish survivors settled there. Very few of the survivors, however, wished to stay in the country of their executioners and the Zionists with the aid of the Jewish Brigade of the British army, who were still stationed in Europe, began a program to move the Jewish refugees to Palestine. Both Britain and the United States had difficulty in deciding how to respond to this. The civil services of Britain, (the Foreign Office) and the United States (the State Department) both tended to side with the Arabs for strategic reasons whereas the politicians of both countries echoed the popular support for the Jews- a conflict lampooned in an episode of the popular TV series “Yes, Prime Minister” which was written, in fact, by the nephew of the first Israeli Foreign Minister, Abba Eban. The Royal Navy continued a blockade of the Palestinian coast to enforce the British policy of restricted immigration of Jews to Palestine, but using force to prevent Jewish survivors reaching Palestine and then incarcerating them in camps in Cyprus was very politically embarrassing for the British government. Meanwhile the effort required to maintain a fragile peace in Palestine was proving too much for Britain which had been virtually bankrupted by the recent war. The one hundred thousand troops in place were constantly at risk of attack from the Jewish insurgents, especially the more extremist Lehi and Irgun, eroding the morale of the troops and causing difficulties in maintaining discipline in the face of constant provocation. In an effort to counter the attacks the British launched “Operation Agatha” with raids on the offices of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem and many of the Jewish settlements and the arrest of some 2700 Jewish activists. In retaliation Irgun bombed the King David Hotel, HQ of the British military and Palestine Police, killing some 91 persons. The burden became too great for Britain to bear unaided and the British government declared to the United Nations General Assembly in February 1947 that it would end its mandate on 1st August 1948 and would hand the mandate (and the problem) back to the UN to solve as best it could.

The United Nations responded by establishing yet another committee- The UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP). This committee, which included prominent Muslim jurists, toured the Holy Land and attempted to promote some sort of consensus. The committee was greeted at Jewish settlements with folk dancing and flowers but boycotted by the Arabs with extremists threatening death to persons who even spoke to UNSCOP. The Arabs suspected, quiet rightly as it turned out, that the committee would favour partition. Most of the Zionists welcomed the partition plan though the more extreme members wanted the whole of Palestine for the Jews. The Arabs bitterly rejected the plan in its entirety. Partition was finally put to vote by the

General Assembly in November 1947. Both the Zionists and the Arabs furiously lobbied the UN delegates and the host countries with threats and bribes being freely made and offered. The Egyptian Foreign Minister stated that partition would endanger the lives of the one million Jews living in Muslim lands and Chaim Weizmann telephoned any statesman who would speak to him. In the end the partition vote passed in the General Assembly by thirty-three votes to thirteen. The United States and the Soviet Union voted aye, as did Australia: Britain abstained. The resulting state allotted to the Jews consisted of three main parts linked by narrow “kissing points”. There was a coastal strip from Jaffa in the south to Haifa in the north, with another area on the west bank of the Sea of Galilee and a large area in the south which consisted mainly of the Negev desert. Jerusalem with its large Jewish population was situated in the middle of the area allocated to the Arabs and was supposed to be under UN control though this never really eventuated.



UN Partition Plan 1947

## **The Armed Struggle for Palestine; The First Arab-Israeli War**

It is worth looking at the armed conflict between the Arabs and Jews in some depth since the outcome was al-Nakba (the catastrophe); a disastrous defeat for the Arabs with approximately 720,000 Arabs, about half of the Palestinian Arab population, being made homeless and forced into refugee camps where they remain more than 60 years later. It resulted in a bitterness and a desire for revenge that continues to

destabilise the Middle East and is one the reasons for the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and for this monograph to be written.

The conflict between the Jews and Arabs may be divided into two phases. The first was essentially a civil war between the Jews and Arabs with irregular warfare from November 1947 to May 1948 when the British Mandate came to an end. British forces were involved to varying extent as they tried to keep the peace but their capacity to influence the hostilities decreased as the strength of their forces declined with time. The second phase, which the Israelis call the “War of Independence”, was a more regular war with the armed forces of the newly declared state of Israel defending against the invading armies of neighbouring Arab countries and continued from May 1948 to June 1949.

Even before the General Assembly vote was passed, Arab armed bands and militia members started to attack Jewish settlements and road transport concentrating on Jewish buses. The Jews initially didn't respond, hoping this was just a spontaneous display of disgust and would blow over. Even when it became apparent that this was the beginning of a serious military campaign to prevent the establishment of a separate Jewish state, the main Jewish armed force, Haganah, held fire. The British had advanced the end of the Mandate to 14th May 1948 and were evacuating their troops as fast as possible so that their capabilities as peace keepers steadily diminished. Haganah preferred to wait them out and to use the time to buy arms from abroad, train their troops and gather intelligence on the Arab forces opposing them. Most of the purchased arms came from Czechoslovakia which had large arms factories set up by the Germans and was desperate for foreign currency. Ironically the Jews were fighting with German weapons and later were even using a Czech adaption of the Messerschmidt 109 fighter against the Egyptians who were flying British Spitfires.

The Arab League sent a force of volunteers known as the Arab Liberation Army (ALA) commanded by Fawzi al-Qawaqji to assist in the fight against the Jews and to counter the Palestinian Arab High Committee's Holy War (al-Jihad) Army. The ALA, which numbered from 3500 to 6000 men was paid for by all the members of the Arab League but mainly supported by Syria. The volunteers were rather hastily trained in Syrian camps before being sent from Syria to fight in northern Palestine . The Holy War Army was engaged mainly in blocking the Tel-Aviv road but was demoralised by the early death of its leader Abd al-Husayni and played little further part in the war. It was finally forcibly disarmed by the Jordanian Arab Legion.

One of the first moves by the Arabs was to try to blockade the Jewish quarter of Jerusalem, a task made easier by the fact that supplies from Tel Aviv needed to negotiate the long and hilly road to Jerusalem which went through Arab territory and provided many points of ambush. Though the Haganah might have wished to avoid offensive action and concentrate on defence, the dissident forces of the Irgun and Lehi

(the Stern Gang) saw no reason for such restraint. In December 1947, the Irgun planted a bomb at the Damascus Gate in the Arab quarter of Jerusalem which killed 20 people, then threw grenades at an Arab bus stop outside the Haifa oil refinery killing another 6 Arab workers. The Arabs inside the plant turned on their Jewish co-workers and killed 39 in retaliation. An endless round of strike and counter strike commenced. In March 1948 a car bomb exploded outside the Jewish Agency and Haganah HQ in Jerusalem killing 13 people.

The Arabs continued to concentrate on cutting off the Jews isolated in Jerusalem and the Etzion Bloc, a group of kibbutzes south of Bethlehem which was also in the middle of territory allotted to the Arabs. Supply convoys to each were frequently ambushed with heavy loss of life. The Haganah High Command realised that they were unable to wait for the British to leave before coming into action, so in March 1948 initiated Plan D which had been especially worked out to maintain contiguity and security of these separated Jewish enclaves. In April Operation Nachshon, the first step of Plan D and the first large scale Haganah operation, was put into place to clear the road to Jerusalem and break the blockade. (Nachshon ben Aminadav, incidentally was a Biblical figure who had been the first to wade into the Red Sea in the story of the Exodus.) Reinforced by a large shipment of Czech arms, Haganah took the offensive and captured several villages overlooking the Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem road. The fiercest fight was for the village of al-Qastal, a small village 8 kms west of Jerusalem which was a key position blocking the road. On April 7th 1948, it was attacked by units of the Palmach, the elite force of the Haganah and the village changed hands several times with some 70 to 80 deaths on either side, (all of whom were combatants) before finally falling to the Palmach. The Arab villagers either fled or were expelled. The most prominent casualty was the death of the Palestinian leader of the Jerusalem section of the Arab Holy War Army, Abd al-Husayni, shot by a Palmach sentry.

### **Deir Yassin**

The day after the battle for al-Qastal, units of the dissident Jewish forces, Irgun and Lehi, supported by Palmach mortar fire, attacked Deir Yassin, another small village overlooking the Jerusalem road. The village was defended; four attackers were killed and 35 wounded and about 30 defenders also died in the attack. The attack had been preceded by a loudspeaker truck warning the population to flee but 80 to 90 villagers who stayed and survived the battle were shot in cold blood by the Irgun and Lehi: a massacre that was to have repercussions still heard around the world. There was outrage in the Arab world and dismay in many sections of the Jewish community. The Jewish Agency sent a formal apology to King Abdullah of Jordan who rejected it, holding that since the Agency was in overall command it could not avoid responsibility.

This, at least, is the story that is repeated, with various embellishments, in most history books, but it has been challenged by several Israeli investigations. They found that there had been desperate house to house fighting and the attackers could only advance by throwing grenades through windows and dynamiting some of the houses with the result that many civilians were killed. The story of the massacre came from the sight of the many bodies retrieved from the ruins and was propagated by Haganah, who were not present at the action but were, at times, bitter rivals of the dissident forces and, needless to say, the story was taken up by the Arab side. The Palestinian Arab Bir Zeit University, in 1987, while repeating the massacre story found the total dead to be 107 with 12 wounded. In the end it seems that the attack was a botched job by the dissident troops of Irgun and Lehi who had not been trained in methods of attacking a defended village containing civilians- a very difficult tactical problem still confronting coalition forces in Afghanistan. The very high ratio of killed to wounded on the Arab side compared with the Jewish casualties, however, does suggest that many of the wounded were executed. Both sides deliberately exaggerated the death toll and atrocity stories for different reasons. On the Jewish side, Haganah used the story to denigrate their right wing rivals and Irgun and Lehi to terrify inhabitants of other villages to flee without a fight. In fact, the leaders of Irgun and Lehi called a press conference on the night of the attack and announced that 200 Arabs had been killed with half of them being women and children. The Arabs embellished the story of the massacre to increase the fighting spirit of their fighters and to try to force other Arab countries to come to their assistance.

For the rest of the war, any massacre of Jews by Arabs could be said to be in retaliation for Deir Yassin and, in fact, retribution was to start five days later. On Mount Scopus in the Arab sector of Jerusalem the Jews maintained Hassadah Hospital, an outstanding university teaching hospital. Each day convoys of Jewish doctors, nurses and medical students made their way to and from the hospital in armoured buses protected by Haganah soldiers. Until now the Arabs had ignored them but after Deir Yassin, a convoy was attacked with the loss of 75 to 80 hospital personnel, many of whom were trapped in the buses and burned alive.

Deir Yassin was also the reason King Abdullah of Jordan gave for allowing units of the Arab Legion to assist the Palestinian Arabs against the Jews. Abdullah had reached an understanding with Golda Meir of the Jewish Agency (and later Prime Minister of Israel) to not attack the parts of Palestine allotted to the Jews by the UN on the understanding that he would use the Arab Legion to secure the Arab part of Palestine for Jordan.

The site of the village of Deir Yassin is now a suburb of Jerusalem and incidentally is occupied by an Israeli psychiatric hospital which specialises in persons suffering from "Jerusalem Syndrome"- a religious psychosis brought on by the intense experience of visiting the many sacred sites in that city.

On May 13, 1948, the Arab Legion with the assistance of Arab irregulars attacked the isolated Jewish kibbutzes of the Etzion bloc, south of Bethlehem. The Legion was equipped with armoured cars and artillery and the kibbutzes were overrun. A total of 129 defenders were killed, many being massacred after they had surrendered, again in retaliation it was said for Deir Yassin. The Legion did move, however, to protect some of the survivors to the point of killing several of the Arab irregulars about to rape their female Jewish prisoners.

During the first five months of 1948, there were many attacks and counter attacks. On the Jewish side there were the Jewish “regular” forces of the Haganah and the elite Palmach plus the dissident Irgun and Lehi. Their aims were initially to defend the Jewish areas from being overrun and Jerusalem from being conquered and hopefully to unite the various Jewish areas into a single area with a defensible perimeter. Jerusalem was to be included. The Jews were also very fearful, rightly or wrongly, that defeat would mean another Nazi style Holocaust. The Arab forces consisted of the local Arab militias with the assistance of the Arab Liberation Army, made up of volunteers from outside Palestine, the Arab Holy War Army comprised of Palestinian Arab irregulars as well as, to a limited extent, the regular and well trained Arab Legion of Jordan. The Arabs had a variety of aims. The locals wished to prevent the establishment of a Zionist state, with some wishing to eliminate all Jews from Palestine by one means or another or to only allow Jews who had been in Palestine since Ottoman times to stay. The ALA wished to prevent the establishment of a Zionist state but stated it would respect the right of the Jews to live peacefully in an Arab Palestine. The Jordanian Arab Legion fought with the more limited aim of securing the areas allotted to the Arabs of Palestine for Jordan and did not attack areas allotted to the Jews.

### **The Battle for Haifa**

The Battle for Haifa, fought on 21 -22 April 1948, serves as an example of a Jewish victory in a situation where both sides may have seemed to be roughly equal but where the Jews had several advantages; the better trained and organised Jewish forces, a central command with clear objectives who were supported by a population with a higher morale and more to lose by defeat. Haifa was a strategic objective during the struggle for Palestine, being the major deep-water port and terminal for the oil pipeline from Iraq. The population of 135000 consisted of 65000 Arabs and 70000 Jews and had been allotted to the Jewish State under the UN partition plan and retention of Haifa was vital to the Jewish cause as it would allow arms and supplies to be brought in easily once the British had left. Haifa was also the major British debarkation point and there was a strong British presence there until the end of the Mandate. The Arabs were at a disadvantage since they were in the midst of a Jewish area and cut off from the other areas allotted to them. Moreover the Jews had a highly placed informer and were able to ambush most of the supply convoys dispatched to Haifa and kill the leader of the Arab forces in the area. Morale was further eroded by

the wealthier Arab families leaving as the end of the Mandate approached. The Haganah now went on the offensive. Columns of their troops marched out of the Jewish areas in parade order to the cheers of the population. Aggressive Jewish propaganda, likened by a British officer to the racial broadcasts of the Nazis, encouraged the Arabs to leave and many took the opportunity before the British completely evacuated the harbour areas. Arab atrocity propaganda didn't help either by grossly exaggerating the likelihood of a massacre following an Arab defeat. The firing by Haganah of random mortar rounds into the Arab areas (to the disgust of the British) caused panic among the townspeople and most of the Arab inhabitants fled by sea while there was still time despite entreaties by the British and even by some Jewish commanders to stay and become citizens of the new state. Many Arabs worried that they might be considered traitors if they stayed and left with the hope that a final Arab victory would allow return to their homes and businesses. Haganah overwhelmed the ALA who, though they put up a desperate resistance, had little chance without outside support. The Jewish Agency and then the Israeli government moved to prevent the return after the final peace of the Arabs who had fled and they have remained in their refugee camps ever since. A constant source of anger in the Muslim world at this injustice.

By the end of the British Mandate on 14 May, the Jewish forces were reasonably happy with their situation. Although they had been outnumbered two to one by the Arabs in Palestine, they had enjoyed far superior planning and had engaged troops of far higher quality than the Arab irregulars with many of the Jewish soldiers having served as regular members of the British army. The Jewish forces enjoyed superior morale and they felt they had much more to lose by defeat. They had achieved their major objective in establishing and holding a Jewish homeland though it consisted of several areas connected by narrow "kissing points". In the north an area was held in Galilee which connected through a narrow corridor with the area on the coast from Haifa to Tel-Aviv which also was narrowly connected to an area of the Negev desert. Western Jerusalem was held though the road to it was under constant threat. The Jordanian Arab Legion had been involved in several places and Jordan seemed to be successful in claiming the areas of Palestine not in Jewish hands.

### **Declaration of the State of Israel**

The day the Mandate ended, Friday 14 May, the leader of the Jewish Agency, David Ben-Gurion read a declaration of the State of Israel at a ceremony in the Tel-Aviv Museum of Art, carefully avoiding any mention of proposed borders. The declaration was greeted with joy by the Jews of Palestine and elsewhere but with dismay and anger by the Muslim world. There were demonstrations and mob attacks on Jews and Jewish property in many parts of the Middle East with the loss of dozens of lives. The Arab media vociferously demanded that the Jewish state be destroyed immediately.

Most Arab leaders felt their position of power to be unstable and were very afraid of “the street” with one Arab leader stating that it would be suicidal for any leader not to go to war. Religious animosity played a major role in the intense emotions being whipped up in the Arab and Muslim world. King Farouk of Egypt repeatedly stated that a war against Israel would be a religious one: “The Muslim religion against theirs”. The Arab army commanders, however, doubted their abilities to wage a successful war against the determined and well organised Israelis. In October 1948, at a press conference, the Palestinian President, Mahmoud Abbas stated that in retrospect it had indeed been a mistake for the Arabs to reject the UN partition plan. In an effort to save face, the Egyptians and Saudis secretly asked the British to stay for another year but were met with a definite negative. While the British were in control no Arab army wished to confront them and the Arabs therefore could not be expected to act against the Jews but now with the British gone the impetus to war was irresistible. Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan and Saudi Arabia declared war. The secretary of the Arab League, Azzam Pasha, got a little carried away when he declared “this will be a war of extermination and a momentous massacre which will be spoken of like the Mongolian massacres and the Crusades”. Indeed, on paper the Arabs did appear to have an overwhelming advantage. The Arab population vastly outnumbered the 650000 Jews of Israel by about 100 to 1 and the Arabs were engaging regular armies supported by air forces and armoured formations against the Israelis who, at the beginning of the war, had neither. Despite their aggressive public statements, however, the Arab leaders didn’t see it like that. The Israelis had an effective central command, were very well organised and determined to defend their new state. A Jewish homeland had been voted in by the United Nations and the Arab forces would be seen as aggressors against the Jews who also enjoyed tremendous support in the wider world having suffered so much recently at the hands of the Nazis. Many Arabs also believed worldwide Jewry to be an immensely powerful force which secretly controlled Western governments and as such would be able to bring irresistible force to bear in support of the Jewish state. The Arab forces were not well trained and had little in the way of reserves of ammunition or spare parts for their heavy equipment which was almost all of British origin, forcing them to rely on the British for supplies. The United Nations declared an embargo on military supplies going to either side in the coming conflict which greatly disadvantaged the Arabs since the Israelis, unlike the Arabs, had established covert lines of supply dating from the time of the Mandate and continued to build up their military establishment. The British sent only small amounts of munitions to their treaty partners of Egypt and Jordan whose armies soon became desperately short of ammunition. Volunteers flocked to the aid of both sides but in the case of the Arabs were mainly enthusiastic but untrained young men often of such poor quality that they were rounded up and sent home. The volunteers to the Israeli side, on the other hand, were mainly trained veterans of the recent World War with hundreds of experienced airmen and tank experts arriving. Many were Jews coming to the aid of the new state but many were Christians who arrived for religious reasons or because they felt out of place and unwanted in peacetime and saw they would be valued in the service of Israel. The

most famous of the Jewish volunteers was Mickey Marcus, previously a logistics officer on General Eisenhower's staff. Organisation of logistics was a major strength of the Israelis and it is said that in wartime while the amateurs talk of tactics, the experts speak of logistics. He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant General, being the first Jewish General since Judas Maccabeus but was accidentally shot dead by a Jewish sentry. David Ben-Gurion described him as "the best man we had" and he was later to be the subject of the 1966 movie "Cast a Giant Shadow".

The Arabs were further disadvantaged by being divided into two mutually antagonistic blocs. On one side were the Hashemite Kingdoms of Jordan and Iraq who were historical enemies of Saudi Arabia which sided with Egypt and Syria to make up the other side. The Jordanians also claimed Palestine for themselves and thus were opposed to forces loyal to Grand Mufti Amin al-Husseini and, in particular, the Holy War Army. The Jordanian Arab Legion, the best troops on the Arab side, did not coordinate its actions with the other Arab forces and notably failed to come to the support of the Egyptian army at a critical time, allowing the Israelis to take them on one at a time. Lebanon was at the time a predominantly Christian nation which went to war rather half heartedly and only then to demonstrate solidarity with the other Arab countries.

At midnight on the 14/15th of May with the end of the British Mandate, Abdullah, King of Jordan drew his pistol, fired a shot into the air and sent the Arab Legion to take the areas allocated to the Arabs of Palestine but which were now claimed by Jordan. One of the first moves of the Arab Legion was to capture the Tegart Fort at Latrun which commanded the central part of the Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem road. The Legion stoutly resisted repeated Jewish attempts to retake it. Many newly arrived and poorly trained Jewish militia troops were pushed into the battles having been told that they were needed to "save Jerusalem". Lightly armed with rifles and Sten guns they had little chance against the dug-in Legion which was supported by artillery and armoured cars and the Israelis sustained very heavy losses. Ariel Sharon, future Prime Minister of Israel, was badly wounded while leading an attack as a Lieutenant of the Israel Defence Force.

In early April 1948, at a conference of Arab leaders in Damascus, it had been announced that the Jewish portion of Jerusalem was to be "strangled" by the blockade as well as attacked by Arab forces inside the city. The difficulty in maintaining control of the whole of Jerusalem had been foreseen by the Jewish High Command and Plan D involved taking over the areas fortified by the British as these forces left at the end of the Mandate and maintaining a link to the Jewish quarter of the Old City. Haganah was successful in taking and holding the vacated British fortifications in the western part of the city but the Jewish quarter of the Old City was on the Eastern side of Jerusalem and thus on the opposite side of the city to the rest of Jewish Palestine. When the Arab Legion moved up the Irgun defenders of the Jewish Old Quarter abandoned it without a fight. The Legion protected the Jewish inhabitants from the

Arab mob, but the Jews were forced to leave their homes and flee to western Jerusalem. The Legion then dynamited 22 of the 27 synagogues in the captured Jewish Quarter. Repeated attempts by Haganah to retake the Old City were unsuccessful and Jerusalem was to remain divided until the “Six Day War” of 1967.

With the Arab Legion holding Latrun, the road to Jerusalem was blocked and it was feared by the Israelis that Jerusalem might indeed be “strangled”. The siege was finally relieved when a road, named the “Burma Road” after the road supplying the Chinese in World War II, was pushed through bypassing the Latrun fortress and out of sight of the Legion artillery. The first supply convoy got through on 10th June 1948.

At the same time as the battles for Latrun were taking place, Israel was attacked in the north by Iraqi and Syrian forces and the volunteers of the Arab Liberation Army commanded by Fawzi al-Qawaqji and supported mainly by Syria. The Syrian armed forces themselves being considered untrained and unreliable. The Iraqis in particular were successful in capturing the city of Jenin and stave off an Israeli attempt to retake it, but then dug in and made no attempt to advance further. This apparent lack of aggression was to have serious consequences for the Iraqi government of the time. The Arab Liberation Army didn't make much of an impression on this occasion either and fled north after contact with the Israeli forces. The ALA later returned to the fight and took several Israeli villages in company with units of the Lebanese army. On the other side of the balance sheet, the ALA was weakened by defection of more than 200 Druze fighters to the Israeli side. The Druze religion is an exclusive monotheistic offshoot of Islam said to be “loving of the Jews” as far back as the 12th century but considered heretical and subject to persecution by orthodox Muslims. Druze had a reputation as determined warriors and remain a valued unit of the Israeli army to this day. As well, a Bedouin tribe from the town of Tuba in northern Palestine fought on the side of the Israelis during this time and tribesmen also continue to serve in the Israel Defense Force.

Towards the end of May 1948, the Egyptian army invaded from the south, in a two pronged attack. One mechanised column supported by tanks advanced north from Gaza along the coast towards Tel-Aviv and the other moved northeast towards Jerusalem. The coastal attack was stopped by a display of Israeli air power. Four newly arrived and assembled Czech Avia S199's (a version of the Me 109) strafed the Egyptians but inflicted little damage. The Egyptians however were impressed and suspecting strong Israeli forces were defending Tel-Aviv, halted and dug in. The Egyptians also attacked the isolated Israeli kibbutz of Negba but were driven off with heavy casualties by a small but determined group of defenders. The Egyptian rear was harassed by Israeli commandos in machine gun equipped jeeps in the manner pioneered by the British Special Air Service, further eroding morale.

The United Nations had hoped that by agreeing to a partition of Palestine, peace would be maintained whereas in fact a civil war and then a full scale international war were precipitated. A truce was called to take effect on 11 June which both the Israelis and Arabs felt obliged to abide by, though the Israelis used the time to train and re-equip their forces. During the truce, a munitions ship, the *Altalena* (a pseudonym which had been used by Zaborinsky) docked in Tel-Aviv. It had been chartered by Irgun who refused to hand the weapons over to the newly formed Israeli Defence Force which was supposed to include all the previously separate armed groups. Fighting broke out and 14 men were killed after artillery commanded by future Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin opened fire.

### **The “10 Days War”**

The Egyptians decided to improve their bargaining position with a surprise attack on several Jewish settlements in the Negev desert, using auxiliary troops to avoid the blame for violating the truce. The attacks were successful in capturing the villages but gave the Israelis an excuse to launch an assault on the Egyptian column on the coast and to try to break through to isolated Israeli settlements in the Negev desert cut off by the Egyptian advance on Jerusalem. The Egyptians then launched attacks to strengthen their flanks. Neither side landed a decisive blow but the Egyptians were running out of ammunition and supplies with the result that morale was failing. The Arab Legion which held positions in the Negev could have assisted the Egyptians by launching at least feint attacks on the Israeli flank but failed to take any measures at all.

The Israelis launched yet another attack in an attempt to relieve the siege of Jerusalem by capturing Lydda and Ramallah and then Latrun and thereby opening the road from Tel-Aviv. The first part of the plan was successful, but again the Arab Legion held Latrun. These operations saw the first use of tanks by the Israelis who had obtained ten Hotchkiss H 35 light tanks from France and were using two Cromwells brought in by British deserters. There were some Israeli successes in the north with the capture of Nazareth from the ALA but fighting ceased again when on 18 July 1948 the United Nations imposed another truce.

UN mediator Count Folke Bernadotte proposed a peace plan which would have seen the end of a separate Jewish state; its replacement being a federation of the Jews and Arabs with Jerusalem being in Arab hands and further Jewish immigration being much reduced. This was bitterly rejected by the Israelis. He later revised the plan but was assassinated in September 1948 by members of Lehi (the Stern Gang). Lehi was proscribed as a terrorist group and several members arrested, found guilty and sentenced to long prison terms but were released later in a general amnesty. The leader of Lehi at the time, Yitzhak Shamir, later became Prime Minister of Israel and served during the First Gulf War of 1991.

The Arab Higher Council moved to establish a Palestinian state to counter the efforts of Jordan to annex the area allotted to the Arabs. The plan called for a state of Palestine with the old flag of the Arab revolt as its standard and Jerusalem as capital and was supported by the Egyptian and Syrians though, as expected, strongly opposed by the Hashemite Kingdoms of Jordan and Iraq. Haj Amin al-Husseini (who had spent the Second World War in Berlin) was proposed as President but the Egyptians lost interest and transferred the Palestinian HQ, and al-Husseini, to Cairo where the movement withered until a revival in 1967.

### **The Second Phase of the Arab-Israeli War of 1948**

The truce imposed by the UN was supposed to allow the Israelis to supply cut off settlements in Arab territory. The Israelis sent ostentatiously large convoys to kibbutzes near Egyptian lines and the Egyptians couldn't resist attacking them giving the Israelis an excuse to launch a major offensive to clear the Egyptians from southern Palestine. After much bitter and sometimes hand-to-hand fighting the Israelis were successful and forced the Egyptians out of Palestine, with the exception of 4000 Egyptians trapped at Faluja, 30 kms west of Gaza. Many Arabs fled their villages with the retreating Egyptian army, adding to the increasing number of refugees. Beersheba in the Negev desert was captured and by early December 1948 the Israelis had advanced out of Palestine into Egyptian territory with an armoured column moving into the Sinai. The Egyptians were now forced to activate the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1936 and call for assistance; a fact usually overlooked in Arab histories of the war. The British threatened to engage the Royal Air Force from bases on the Suez Canal and the Israelis hastily withdrew. The unpopular government of Egyptian King Farouk was blamed for this defeat and his Prime Minister was assassinated by the Muslim Brotherhood, the first of many consequences of the disaster for Arab governments.

In the north of Palestine the Israeli forces were also successful in clearing the Lebanese Army, the Arab Liberation Army and Syrian forces from Galilee. The Israeli success was marred by another massacre of 50 to 60 civilians after surrender, this time by members of the Israeli Defence Force and not the irregular units involved in the earlier Deir Yassin atrocity. The officer commanding the offending company was court-martialled and sentenced to a long prison term though was released shortly after in an amnesty.

### **Aftermath of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War**

By February 1949, the Israelis had been successful in defeating the Egyptians in the south and the Syrians, Iraqis and Lebanese in the north and now controlled territory 50% greater than that awarded by the UN Partition plan. The Israeli cabinet decided to accept the area captured by the Arab Legion, thereby losing the Old Jewish Quarter

of Jerusalem which remained in Jordanian hands until 1967. Over the next few months the Israelis and Arab states agreed to an armistice in separate agreements with the Iraqis holding out the longest. These however, were not peace treaties and the Arab side was left embittered by the defeat with some 720000 Palestinian refugees in what was hoped to be temporary camps in Arab territory. The Arab hosts refused to try to absorb them, mainly for political reasons but also because of economic problems. They were provided with minimal care by a special UN agency, the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and became increasingly bitter and radical. In 1951 King Abdullah was assassinated by a young Palestinian refugee though in Jordan the King was generally thought to have led the most successful of the Arab armies and his successors remain in power in 2011.

Though often characterised as a David versus Goliath conflict, (at least by the Israelis with themselves as the stout-hearted David), the two sides were not evenly matched. The Israelis were much better trained, had a higher morale and despite the disparity in population numbers, put more men in the field. They enjoyed interior communications, had a well trained general staff and were opposed by Arab forces which were divided into two mutually antagonistic blocs.

King Abdullah claimed the remainder of Palestine as the “West Bank” of his Kingdom of Jordan, though by agreement with the Israelis, traffic was allowed along the Tel-Aviv road and access provided to the Hebrew University and Hadassa Hospital on Mount Scopus now in Jordanian hands. About 150000 Palestinian Arabs remained in the areas now part of Israel. Initially distrusted and subject to harsh restrictions, in time they were granted greater freedoms and became “Israeli Arabs” and elected their own parliamentary representatives. There are now Arab cabinet ministers and Arab officers of the Israeli Defence Force.

The UN envoy and successor to the assassinated Count Bernadotte, African American Dr Ralph Bunche, finally arranged talks between the Egyptians and Israelis. A demilitarised zone was agreed between the two with Egypt keeping a slice of the Palestinian Mediterranean coast known as the Gaza Strip. The Egyptian forces which had been encircled at Faluja were allowed to leave and the civilians to stay if they wished, but many were intimidated into leaving by the victorious Israelis. Dr Bunche was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1950 for his efforts. The defeat of the Egyptian forces further destabilised the government of the already unpopular King Farouk, descendant of the Albanian soldier Muhammad Ali. In 1952 the government was overthrown in an army led coup with the eventual rise to power of General Gamal Abd al-Nasir (usually given as Nasser), who had been one of the Egyptians in the Faluja pocket. His great popularity in the Muslim world was due to his forceful opposition to Israel and the forces of the West. He unilaterally renounced the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty which had given Britain rights to maintain a huge garrison in Egypt to protect the Suez Canal.

The Iraqis seemed to have made only a half hearted effort in the war with Israel and had suffered few casualties. The Hashemite Kingdom was blamed and was one of the reasons for the overthrow of the king and the establishment of the Ba'ath led republic in 1958. The Ba'athists, with roots in European Fascism, remained in power until themselves overthrown by US led coalition forces in 2003.

The warnings about the consequences of war to the Jewish communities in Arab countries proved to be well founded. Riots and killings forced almost all these Jews to flee to Israel, usually leaving all they owned behind. Israel's population was increased almost overnight by about 550000 people, including the ancient Iraqi Jews who had been living there since the Babylon deportation two and a half thousand years before. The number of Jews forced to become refugees was similar to the number of displaced Palestinian Arabs, but whereas the Jews were absorbed by Israel, the Arabs remain in camps, a point often made by Israeli sympathisers.

### **The Six Day War**

The Arab World continued to smoulder with the humiliation of the defeat of 1948. The West were seen as backers of Israel leading to the more socialist governments of Egypt, Syria and later Iraq to turn to the Soviet Union for technical advice, loans and arms. In July 1956, President Nasser of Egypt announced the nationalisation of the Suez Canal- a great blow to the prestige of Britain. The Prime Minister of Britain, Sir Anthony Eden had been a junior officer in the First World War and worried that if action were not taken early, the end result could be another war between the Soviet Union and the West with casualties on the scale of that disastrous war. In conjunction with France and Israel, Britain landed troops at Suez in a move that was very popular with the British public, and with the Hashemite Kingdoms of Jordan and Iraq, but otherwise drew international condemnation. The United States threatened to take economic action against the British who were forced to make a humiliating withdrawal. This incidentally was the reason Britain then refused to back the US in Vietnam following the defeat of the French there.

The Palestine Liberation Organisation had been founded at the 1964 Arab League summit in Cairo. Its initial charter called on "The entire Arab nation" to give military, spiritual and material support to the liberation of Palestine. In its original form it offered citizenship to only those Israeli Jews who could trace their origin to before the modern Zionist migrations and was thus seen as calling for the destruction of the State of Israel. In 1966 Syria and Egypt signed a mutual defense agreement seen as a further threat to Israel. PLO guerrillas commenced operations against Israel which retaliated by using Israel Defence Force units to strike at Palestinian targets inside Jordan, fighting off Jordanian forces coming to the aid of the PLO. The Jordanians stridently denounced the Egyptian government for not coming to their assistance. The Egyptians responded by taking a more aggressive stance toward Israel. The Straits of

Tiran, leading from the Red Sea to the Israeli port of Eilat, were closed to Israeli shipping in May 1967 knowing that Israel had previously declared that this would be seen as an act of war. Egyptian forces began massing on the Israeli border and the media of the Arab countries began calling for Israel to be destroyed. Egypt and Jordan signed a defense pact later on May 30th and Egypt, Jordan and Syria all increased their level of military mobilisation. Rather than wait for the Arab forces to make the first strike, on June 4th 1967, the Israeli cabinet decided to go to war. A massive air strike was launched that virtually destroyed the Egyptian Air Force, with subsequent attacks taking out the air forces of the other Arab combatants. Without air cover the Egyptian ground forces were very vulnerable and began a retreat towards the Suez Canal. Israeli armoured forces cut them off at several mountain pass choke points with the Egyptians suffering massive losses. The Israeli Air Force used napalm on the fleeing horde, a fact still bitterly resented by the survivors. In the north, the Syrians were persuaded to attack by false reports of great Egyptian victories but without air cover were easily defeated. The Jordanians were also lured into battle by false reports of Egyptian victories even though Israel had declared it would not attack Jordan if Jordan stayed out of the fight. King Hussein personally led his troops but they were overwhelmed by the Israelis who captured all the West Bank including the section of Jerusalem held by the Jordanians since 1948.

The Israelis did make efforts to conciliate the defeated Arabs of Jerusalem. General Moshe Dyan ordered an Israeli flag removed from the Dome of the Rock and in a very generous move allowed the Muslims to retain control of the Temple Mount and forbade Jews from praying there. The Chief Rabbi of Israel, Shlomo Goren, had wanted to dynamite the mosques on Temple Mount in retaliation for the destruction of the synagogues in the Old Jewish Quarter in 1948 and in the hope that it might hasten the return of the Jewish Messiah.

## **The Consequences of the Arab Defeat of 1967**

The result was another humiliating defeat of the Arab forces and increased bitterness in the Arab camp. The PLO was reorganised under the leadership of Yasser Arafat and intensified attacks on Israel using guerrilla tactics, which had been used by the Jews against the British but which are an admission of weakness. In the wider view, the Arab world was again confronted with the dilemma it had faced since the Awakening in the 19th century: how to manage the challenge of the West of which Israel is just one example. Was the answer to be modernisation, derided by some as “Westernisation”, or a rejection of the West and adoption of a hard-line Islamic strategy with revival of traditional practices which might lead to divine favor and ultimate victory? This is the major problem which the Muslim world has to deal with in the twenty first century and has been brewing since the Turkish Ottoman conquest and the consequent decline in the leadership the Arabs had held in virtually all fields

of human endeavor. It is often stated, and was again in a recent article in “New Scientist” (2809;2011), that the Muslim countries are weak because they had been colonised by the West. In this view, the establishment of Israel is just another of these imperial conquests. In fact, the Muslim countries were gathered into European empires because they were backward and weak and not the other way around. Indeed, after the First World War, all Muslim countries were controlled by European powers. The humiliation of the Arabs was worsened by their being able to look back on a great past. The empires of the Persians and Arabs of the Golden Age were, by and large, models of tolerance - a sign of confidence. The personal physician of the great Saladin was a Jew, Moses Maimonides, and another famous physician, polymath and philosopher of the time, ibn Zakariya Razi (known in the West as Rhazes) who, while acknowledging the existence of God, reserved harsh criticism for any human claiming to be a prophet. This ran counter to the central theme of Islam, but Rhazes did not suffer for his opinions, though his books were destroyed with the later intolerance of the Ottomans and it's only through books written to contradict his views that they are known at all.

## **Conclusion**

The establishment of Israel was the result of European persecution, initially by the Russians, then the French and finally and most importantly by the Nazis. The Palestinian Arabs bore the burden of these crimes with the creation of the state of Israel but few great nations have a virgin birth devoid of sin. Israel was founded in law by the United Nations and is as unlikely to agree to give the land back to the Arabs as Australia is to give this land back to the Aborigines or the Anglo-Saxons to give England back to the Welsh.

Palestinians are now faced with the dilemma of how to advance the Palestinian cause. The PLO accepts the existence of the state of Israel and advocates a program of democracy and modernisation but is being fiercely challenged by parties which follow the path laid out by the Muslim Brotherhood. This must mean rejection of parliamentary democracy, since this would produce man-made laws whereas the proper course is to adhere rigidly to the Laws of God as set out in the Qur'an. The Jews are also seen as recalcitrant deniers of the Prophet and must not be allowed to retain the State of Israel in the Holy Land.

Israel is also the subject of much Islamic enmity, not so much because the Jews came from elsewhere- the Arabs who flocked to Palestine in the earlier part of the 20th century are not resented- but because it is a Jewish state. Article 22 of the 1988 Hamas Covenant sees the conflict as just one facet of a worldwide struggle between Judaism and Islam. A textbook for senior high-school students in Saudi Arabia specifically states that the struggle against Israel is not over land but is a war between

Islam and Judaism. The conflict in the Holy Land will not be resolved until the internal struggle in Islam between those endeavouring to modernise society and those holding to a strict adherence to the doctrines of Islam is resolved. In this view the main reason the State of Israel rankles is because it is an enduring symbol of the supremacy of the West and modernity. The Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt has referred to Israel as “The Zionist Proxy of the Far Enemy”- (the Far Enemy meaning the United States, the Near Enemy being the recently deposed government of Mubarak). It is possible to stand in the main street of any city in the Muslim world and not see anything that did not originate in the West apart from women wearing headscarves. The leading role of the West, in particular the United States, and by extension the anger felt over the existence of Israel, will not change and, in my opinion, will only become more marked if the push to return Islamic society, of which Arab Palestine is a part, to a more traditional view of life is successful.

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