MATERIALS FOR THE STUDY OF THE WORK AND THOUGHT

OF ARNOLD J. TOYNBEE

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Anonymous [Arnold Joseph Toynbee], *A Federal Solution (Editorial)*, in *Palestine: The Wider Hope*, I-IV, in «The Round Table. A Quarterly Review of the Politics of the British Commonwealth», XXIX, 114 (March 1939), pp. 252-277, IV, pp. 268-277 (https://www.academia.edu/70437086/Arnold_Joseph_Toynbee_Palestine_A_Federal_Solution). For Toynbee's authorship of this text see Alexander C. May (St. John's College, Oxford), *The Round Table, 1910-66*, Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Oxford, January 1995, pp. 282, note 1, 505.

NOTE

Toynbee's editorial was the concluding part of an article comprising «four sections, the last of which discusses certain proposals on which "The Round Table" believes might be founded a constructive, durable and friendly solution of the Palestine problem. This is preceded by an account of recent events in Palestine, and by contributions from two standpoints that have not always been given full recognition, namely, the standpoint of the Jews who do not believe in political Zionism [represented, most likely, by Harold Laski (see below, p. 4, note 1)], and that of the neighbouring Arab or partly Arab States» (The Editor, in *Palestine: The Wider Hope*, cit., p. 252).

PALESTINE:
A FEDERAL SOLUTION

(Editorial)

By Arnold J. Toynbee

The most prominent feature of the Peel Commission's report, presented in July 1937, was not the partition proposal, nor any other recommendation, positive or negative. It was the warning – urgently repeated on every other page of that unusually able and far-seeing state paper – that the most fatal thing in Palestine would be to continue to postpone the day of decision. Time, the Commission tried to impress upon the Government, was working against the possibility of a solution and in favour of a catastrophe; and the members of the Commission showed their public spirit by submitting that it mattered less that His Majesty's Government should accept the Commission's own particular recommendation than that they should take some decision or other, and carry out this decision, whatever it might be, without delay. To this warning, the Government's reply has been to lose nearly two precious years – with the result that the Royal Commission's perspicacity has been most unhappily vindicated.

Partition is dead; for, although the British Government committed themselves to it on the morrow of the publication of the Royal Commission's report, and although it was afterwards accepted in principle by the Jews, the Arabs have discovered that the Government's will to put this policy through has given way in face of Arab intransigence. It is the belief of «The Round Table» that, in rejecting partition out of hand, the Arabs were not acting in their own best interests. Fearing, as they genuinely do fear, to find themselves swamped under a flood of Jewish immigration, surely they would have exorcised this danger most effectively by securing a territorial frontier, endorsed and guaranteed by Great Britain and by the Council of the League of Nations, beyond which no Jew would have been allowed to immigrate without their leave. The Arabs might have driven a hard bargain over the exact location of the line – the Royal Commission's detailed territorial proposals were only tentative – but

probably they would have been wise, on a long view, to sacrifice a fraction of Arab territory in order to make sure of retaining the rest for all time.

However, the Arabs have rejected partition; and they have now been joined by His Majesty's Government. The essence of their demand has been that the whole of Palestine should be included in a sovereign independent Arab State which should be in treaty relations with Great Britain, on the lines of the Anglo-'Iraqi treaty of 1950 and the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1936. Within this Arab State the existing Jewish population of Palestine would be guaranteed those minority rights that have been guaranteed to other minorities in the post-war minorities protection treaties and declarations. But they would have no more than a minority's status – underwritten by Great Britain and by the Council of the League – and they would remain a minority for ever, since the complete cessation of Jewish immigration into Palestine has been an emphatic part of the Palestinian Arabs' demands. On this programme, all Palestinian Arabs agreed. The Nashashibi faction has been just as intransigent as the Husseini faction of which the Mufti of Jerusalem is the leader.

The British Government, on the other hand, cannot agree to the reduction of the Jews in Palestine to the status of a mere minority, and this for several reasons, each of which would be decisive in itself. All over central and eastern Europe and south-western Asia, the minorities have gone to the wall in these post-war years, and international guarantees have not availed to save them. The pledges given by the Polish Government have not saved the German and Ukrainian minorities in Poland; the pledges given by the 'Iraqi Government have not saved the Assyrians in 'Iraq. In the light of all our post-war experience, Great Britain cannot now acquit herself of her obligations to the Jews in Palestine by writing out paper guarantees. She could not take so inhumanly cynical a course even if she had no special obligations to the Jews in Palestine; but as a matter of fact she has promised them that they shall live in Palestine not on sufferance but as of right, and it is on the strength of this British promise that hundreds of thousands of Jews have settled in Palestine during the past twenty years. Here is an obligation which she cannot shuffle off but which at the same time she cannot honour without placing herself in a quandary.

The crux of the problem may be stated thus: Great Britain cannot allow the Jewish community in Palestine to fall into the position of a mere minority, never to be reinforced

by further immigration, within a sovereign independent Arab State; since, however, the independence that has been granted to all the Arab peoples round about cannot be withheld from the Palestinian Arabs, Great Britain is committed in Palestine to some form of territorial separation between an area in which Arab independence will be complete and another area in which the Jewish element will be able to live, not as a minority under Arab domination, but as "first-class citizens" of the State. It is, however, geographically impossible to draw a line substantially embracing the whole of the present Jewish community in Palestine, and giving this community reasonable room for expansion, without including a large number of Arabs. In other words, if the Palestinian Jews are not to be reduced to the status of a minority in an Arab State, then an appreciable fraction of the Palestinian Arabs will have to be reduced to the status of a minority in an area in which the Jews will be in a majority, besides being "first-class citizens" of the State.

This mixed area may be kept under partial British control; the most stringent guarantees may be devised for the principal Arab enclaves in it; yet, when the problem has been reduced to a geographical and demographical minimum, a hard residual core will remain. In a certain area of Palestine there will be an Arab population debarred from the enjoyment of full national self-government within an Arab national State, and feeling itself threatened – in spite of all the guarantees –

with being overwhelmed by its Jewish neighbours. This non-independent Arab minority will be separated only by an artificial frontier from the independent Arabs in the rest of Palestine and in the other Arab countries round about. No doubt it will be constantly appealing to its fellow Arabs for support; and these appeals will be constantly working upon the feelings of the rest of the Arab world. In other words, the Palestinian problem that has defeated British statesmen for the last twenty years will have been merely confined to a rather smaller area without being either solved or modified. It has been said of the Czechoslovakia of 1918-38 that she was a residuum of the pre-war Austria in which all the pre-war Austrian problems were perpetuated in miniature; in a similar way, the post-war Palestine, with all its problems, will be perpetuated in the smaller mixed Jewish-Arab area unless some new factor is brought in to prevent it.

How, in these extraordinarily difficult circumstances, can the mandatory Power bring Arabs and Jews rather nearer towards agreement? While the details of a permanent solution are being worked out, a provisional arrangement might be to lay down a numerical limitation for the Jewish community: to decide, for instance, that Jewish immigration must be so regulated as to cease as soon as the Jews become 40 per cent, of the total population of Cisjordanian Palestine[1]. That would reconcile the Jews' demand that immigration shall not be stopped with the Arabs' demand that they shall be guaranteed against being reduced to a minority in their own native land. But this method of numerical limitation bristles with difficulties, and cannot form part of a permanent solution. It would in practice reduce Jewish immigration to such small numbers as to make the distinction between this and total prohibition little more than nominal; it would leave on British shoulders the onus of assessing the Jewish quota, period by period; and this task, besides being politically invidious, would be administratively almost impracticable. In order to be executed effectively, it would involve the taking of a six-monthly census in Palestine and the absolute stoppage of illicit Jewish immigration – and these two provisos, between them, amount almost to a *reductio ad absurdum* of the project.

If numerical limitation is adopted as an interim measure, a mere *modus vivendi*, it will have to give way as quickly as possible to some form of geographical limitation. A line will have to be drawn somewhere in Palestine, to the east of which Jewish immigration would be subject to Arab wishes, while to the west of it (save in certain predominantly Arab enclaves) the Jews might introduce as many Jewish immigrants as the area was able to support. This would place the onus of the decisions about immigration where they ought to rest – that is to say, on Jewish and Arab shoulders. It virtually brings us back, however, to the proposals for "cantonisation" that were commonly mooted before the Peel Commission pointed out their inherent weaknesses.

[1] See footnote on p. 262, above [*A Non-Zionist Jewish Standpoint*, by a Member of British Jewry [Harold Laski? See Alexander C. May (St. John's College, Oxford), *The Round Table, 1910-66*, Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Oxford, January 1995, p. 505], in *Palestine: The Wider Hope*, I-IV, in «The Round Table. A Quarterly Review of the Politics of the British Commonwealth», XXIX, 114 (March 1939), pp. 252-277, II, p. 262, note by the «Round Table» Editor].

The chief difficulty does not lie in the drawing of the dividing line, though that is difficult enough. In which quarter should the mixed Jewish-Arab area be given its necessary elbow room? In Galilee or in the Negeb? The Negeb is a spacious and almost empty country with unexplored possibilities of development; but unfortunately the Negeb cannot be annexed to the coastal region, north of Jaffa, in which the Jewish population is thickest, without embracing, in the Gazzah district, a settled Arab population hardly less numerous than the Arab population of Galilee. Wherever the line is drawn, it is bound to net a considerable number of Arabs who will be deeply aggrieved at being excluded from the adjacent area of Arab self-government; and in the absence of some over-riding factor this problem of a dissatisfied and apprehensive Arab minority will always be with us.

But the crux of cantonisation is not this; it is the question who would control the common services that would have to remain in the hands of some all-Palestinian authority so long as cantonisation is not carried to the length of a complete partition of Palestine into two sovereign and independent States. These common services would be immensely important. Presumably they would include, for example, both customs (including the apportionment of the customs revenue) and defence. Whoever controls these services exercises some of the most vital sovereign powers in Palestine; by implication, these powers would be withheld from the local authorities in the cantons. For the moment, no doubt, this problem could be solved very simply by continuing the mandate and leaving all these common services in the hands of the present mandatory Power; and this might even be a permanent solution as far as the mixed Jewish-Arab area is concerned. But what about the purely Arab area? Here the effect would be to confine Arab self-government within limits far narrower than the full sovereignty of 'Iraq or Egypt, and even narrower than the qualified independence of Trans-Jordan. It is inconceivable that the Palestinian Arabs will agree both to the permanent exclusion of the mixed area from the domain of Arab independence and to a drastic restriction of their independence even within that domain itself. If the Arabs are to be reconciled, then it will have to be stipulated here and now that sooner or later the common services shall be handed over to some federal authority.

There, however, we come up against the difficulty which the Royal Commission has pointed out. Whoever controls the federal services will be virtually sovereign of Palestine as

a whole. If it is to be a federation of two members – a wholly Arab canton and a predominantly Jewish canton – then the federal services must fall, *de facto*, into the hands of either the Jewish or the Arab party, and in either event the situation for the other party would be intolerable. If the Arabs control the federal government, the Jews will after all be reduced in effect to the status of a minority; if the Jews control it, the Arabs will be subjected to a Jewish ascendancy in Palestine which will be tantamount in practice to a Jewish State.

Can this crux of the problem of federation be overcome? The difficulty is acute because, if the federation is confined to the area of the Palestine mandate, two partners, and two only, stand face to face: on the one hand the mixed Jewish-Arab canton; on the other hand a Palestinian Arab canton, which will presumably include not only the major part of Cisjordanian Palestine but also the present principality of Trans-Jordan. Is there a possibility of surmounting this difficulty by embracing, in the eventual federation, the two States of Syria and the Lebanon, which are at present under French mandate, as well as the two territories into which it is proposed to divide the present British mandated territory in Palestine? Syria, in the wide sense of the whole country lying between Turkey, 'Iraq, Arabia and Egypt, is a natural and historic unity, which was artificially partitioned in the peace settlement in order to meet, not any local needs or wishes, but the respective exigencies of British and French imperialism as embodied in the "Sykes-Picot" agreement. If and when the British and French relinquish their mandates, it would be the most natural thing in the world for the Syria that they have arbitrarily divided to come together again.

It would be natural and at the same time it would be expedient; for this reunion would obviously make the problem of federation much easier in both the present French and the present British mandated territories. It would be much easier for a Syria, a Lebanon, a Palestinian Arab State and a mixed Jewish-Arab State in Palestine to enter into a federation *à quatre* than it would be for two sets of two partners each – Syria *vis-à-vis* the Lebanon and the two Palestinian territories *vis-à-vis* one another – to try to federate separately *à deux*. For the latter plan would mean that the control of the federal powers must fall to one or other of two partners, to the anxiety and perhaps to the detriment of the other. In a federation of four members this dilemma would not arise, and a federal balance of power would be much easier to achieve.

Cannot the French and British Governments put their heads together to compass the common solution of their parallel problems in the Levant? Together they may hope to extricate themselves from the analogous difficulties in which their respective mandates have involved them.

The wider federation, which would no doubt have special relations with neighbouring States – Turkey, 'Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt – obviously cannot be brought into being at once. Even if there were no other obstacles, the French Government have matters almost as difficult as the Jew-Arab conflict to settle in Syria and the Lebanon before they will feel able to relinquish their mandatory control. But it will surely be wise for the British Government, if it can obtain the concurrence of the French, to declare publicly now that this is the goal towards which its eyes are turned, as it continues to carry out its undertakings to both Jews and Arabs. Only with the compensation of a promised wider unity are the Arabs likely to be reconciled both to the continuance of Jewish immigration into Palestine and to what that necessarily implies, the creation of an Arab minority in the mixed Jewish-Arab area. Only thus can Great Britain be permanently assured of the friendship of a group of peoples occupying territory of extreme importance for British Commonwealth defence, while at the same time she can be rid of the arduous and painful task of internal defence that she now shoulders in Palestine. These are the fundamental strategic considerations for Great Britain, though there are other important questions, such as the use of Haifa for naval purposes and the defence of the oil pipe-line, which would have to be settled after the model of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of alliance.

In the meantime, a form of territorial rather than numerical limitation of immigration into Palestine is the only path towards self-government for Palestine that is compatible with realism and with Great Britain's international duty. Numerical limitation on the lines of a maximum Jewish percentage, which may be found advisable as a temporary expedient, cannot be more than that. And if the revised cantonisation idea – partition without partition – is to be a stepping stone to something greater and more lasting, it must provide for the establishment of common democratic institutions for all matters of common concern to the Arab and the mixed areas. The two communities must not be allowed to grow further and further apart, but from the beginning must have the means of facing their common problems

– which are many – not as enemies but as co-operators in self-government. At first, while Great Britain retains her full mandatory powers, these representative institutions will have to be only advisory in the more important fields; but the unwritten principle should be adopted that if the two communities are agreed the mandatory Power will concur, subject to any over-riding reasons of state. Among the matters of greatest moment that will fall to the all-Palestinian democratic institutions to consider will be the collection and distribution of revenues from joint sources, such as the yield of the common customs tariff. By this process, rather than by any direct bookkeeping adjustment, will the greater wealth of the Jewish community serve to raise the administrative and economic standard among the Arabs.

The common interests of the two communities – indeed of all the peoples dwelling in the lands that lie between the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean with its two northwestern fingers – are plain both in the economic and in the strategic spheres. The problem is to combine the service of the common interests with satisfaction for the national aspirations of both Jews and Arabs. It can only be done if those aspirations find scope on two different planes – those of the Jews in that portion of Palestine of which they will have freedom to make whatever they can, those of the Arabs in the wider confederation of the Near East.