

On the instructions of His Excellency, Baron Sonnino, His Majesty's Minister of Foreign Affairs, I have the honour to inform you that with reference to your representations His Majesty's Government are pleased to confirm the Declaration already made through their representatives in Washington, The Hague, and Salonica, to the effect that they will use their best endeavours to facilitate the establishment in Palestine of a Jewish National Centre, it being understood that this shall not prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the legal or political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.

(d) The Vatican

Telegram to British Foreign Office, March 13, 1917 from the British Embassy at the Vatican.

Zionism: Vatican's attitude that Christians may receive treatment less favourable than that marked out to Zionists.

(Minutes) Political

If by "more extreme tendencies" is meant the Zurich Conference, we have a good reply, because the Zionists proper do not countenance the policy there set forth, but the Pope's fears are vaguely expressed.

I think we had better say nothing more to the Vatican until we have the views of the Peace Delegation.

These are only the little beginnings of our troubles in Palestine if we are to be saddled with that Mandate and I confess that I fully share the Pope's anxiety as to "more extreme tendencies." He probably has in his mind something much more vague and alarming than mere temporal ambitions and foresees a spiritual campaign against Christendom. Is not anti Christ according to the Roman tradition, to be a Jew? Jewry under the guise of Bolshevism, has already destroyed the Orthodox Church and may not Bolshevism do the same for Rome?

The reference to Sonnino is significant, for Sonnino himself is of course a Jew.

*S.K. March 15, 1919*

(4) ZIONISM AND JEWISH SETTLEMENT IN ERETZ ISRAEL IN THE EYES OF JAMES BALFOUR AND COLONEL MEINERTZHAGEN

(a) Arthur James Balfour's speech during the Palestine debate in the House of Lords on 21.6.1922.

(b) Extracts from the diary of Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen, legal adviser to the

British military authorities in Eretz Israel who was directly responsible to the British Foreign Office, to whom he sent his reports.

**(a) Balfour's Speech during the Palestine Debate in the House of Lords,  
21.6.1922**

I hold (he said) that from a purely material point of view, the policy that we initiated is likely to prove a successful policy. But we have never pretended — certainly I have never pretended — that it was purely from these materialistic considerations that the Declaration of November, 1917 originally sprung. I regard this not as a solution, but as a partial solution of the great and abiding Jewish problems.

My noble friend told us, and I believe him absolutely, that he has no prejudice against the Jews. I think I may say that I have no prejudice in their favour. But their position and their history, their connection with world religion and with world politics is absolutely unique. There is no parallel to it, there is nothing approaching a parallel to it in any other branch of human history. Here you have a small race, originally inhabiting a small country, I think about the size of Wales or Belgium, at any rate of comparable size to those two, at no time in its history wielding anything that can be described as material power, sometimes crushed between great Oriental monarchies, its inhabitants deported, then scattered, then driven out of the country altogether into every part of the world, and yet maintaining continuity of religion and racial tradition of which we have no parallel elsewhere. That in itself is sufficiently remarkable, but consider, it is not a pleasant consideration but it is one that we cannot forget, how they have been treated during long centuries which in some parts of the world extend to the hour and the minute in which I am speaking. Consider how they have been subjected to tyranny and persecution, consider whether the whole culture of Europe, our whole religious organisation of Europe has not from time to time proved itself guilty of great crimes against this race. I quite understand that some members of this race may have given, doubtless did give, occasion for much ill-will and I do not know how it could be otherwise, treated as they were, but if you are going to lay stress on that, do not forget what part they have played in the intellectual, the artistic, the philosophic and the scientific development of the world . . .

Our policy may fail. I do not deny that this is an adventure. Are we never to have adventures? Are we never to try new experiments? I hope that your lordships will never sink to that unimaginative depth, and that experiment and adventure will be justified if there is any case or cause for this justification. Surely it is in order that we may send a message to every land where the Jewish race has been scattered, a message that will tell them that Christendom is not oblivious of their faith, is not unmindful of the service they have rendered to the great religions of the world, and most of all to the

religion that the majority of your lordships' House profess, and that we desire to the best of our ability to give them that opportunity of developing, in peace and quietness under British rule, those great gifts which hitherto they have been compelled to bring to fruition in countries that know not their language and belong not to their race? That is the ideal which I desire to see accomplished, that is the aim which lay at the root of the policy I am trying to defend; and though it be defensible indeed on every ground, that is the ground which chiefly moves me.

(b) Extracts from the diary of Colonel Richard Meinertzhagen  
2.XII.1917 Richon, Palestine

The Jew, or rather the Zionist, regards us frankly as the instrument sent by God to fulfil the Promise and restore the Holy Land to Israel. As such we are everywhere welcomed, and a very sincere relief is felt throughout all Jewish Colonies at the final removal of the Turkish yoke, which to them spelt oppression, massacre, a hopeless future and an effective check to peaceful development, whether industrial or agricultural. Under our rule they are confident that all their effort toward industrial colonization, which is considerable, will bear fruit. It gives Zionism a tremendous impetus.

I am stopping this evening in a Jewish Hotel in a Jewish Colony (Richon) and have frequently discussed the Zionist movement with hard-thinking and responsible Jews. They are a quick-witted intelligent people, who have made for themselves a great future in Palestine and they intend to follow their destinies out here to their ultimate goal, namely a thriving and well-governed Palestine for the Jews. They have a tremendous belief in themselves and a persistent determination and steadfastness of purpose which is unbounded and surprising after their long banishment and persecution. Their history alone makes one wonder how they have preserved their nationality for so long. And for all these long centuries they have waited and waited till at last it has come. Never have they been so near to realizing their ideals. Very naturally they are drunk with energy, emotion and excitement.

The true Zionist has no politics or political activity. Neither should we create any political electricity among them. They are not working only for the purpose of becoming prosperous; their whole life in Palestine is their ideal, but it is not politics; it is the re-establishment of Jewish communities and customs in a country which was for so many years their own and where was evolved that greatest of great creeds — Mono-theism, which has influenced humanity more than any other idea. These Jewish villages are organized cultural bodies which should help and amplify the task of a good government. Their little village governments are communal and afford fertile soil on which to build our Palestine administration. They regard the Arab population as lazy, reactionary and bitterly hostile to their occupation. They have tried to live beside the Arab and be friendly to him but no amount of

kindness or humouring will make the Arab love them or even like them. Such then are two of the elements which face the Political Officer in this new territory. But one thing is sure. The Jew, however small his voice, however mild his manner, will in the end be heard and he will succeed. The Arab will trumpet and bluster, others in Europe and America will sing his praises if the local orchestra breaks down, but he will remain where he is and has for ever been, an inhabitant of the east, nurturing stagnant ideas and seeing no further than the narrow doctrines of Mohammed.

The Arabs of Ramleh gave us an amusing incident yesterday which accurately reflects their attitude towards us. A large batch of Turkish prisoners was being marched through the village but they were not preceded by their British Guard. The Arabs, thinking it was the return of the Turkish Army, turned out in force, yelling with delight and waving Turkish flags: it was not till the end of the column appeared and they saw British soldiers with fixed bayonets that they realized their mistake and great was their confusion. Their faces fell with a bump and they slunk disconsolate to their hovels.

Personal

25.III.1919

British Delegation, Paris

My Dear Prime Minister,

You asked me yesterday to send you an unofficial letter on the subject of the sovereignty of Sinai. I regard this question as supremely important — not at the moment but in years to come. May I enter more fully into the question than I was able to do yesterday.

We are very wise in allowing the Jews to establish their National Home in Palestine; we have also freed the Arabs from the Turkish yoke and we cannot for ever remain in Egypt. This Peace Conference has laid two eggs — Jewish Nationalism and Arab Nationalism; these are going to grow up into two troublesome chickens; the Jew virile, brave, determined and intelligent. The Arab decadent, stupid, dishonest and producing little beyond eccentrics influenced by the romance and silence of the desert. The Jews, despite dispersal, have distinguished themselves in the arts, music, science and gave Britain one of its distinguished Prime Ministers.

In fifty years time both Jew and Arab will be obsessed with nationalism, the natural outcome of the President's self-determination. Nationalism prefers self-government, however dishonest and inefficient, to government by foreigners, however efficient and beneficial. Nationalism moreover involves the freedom of the State but ignores the freedom of the individual; it is a sop to professional politicians and agitators, and may involve gross injustices to the people.

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H.M.G. Arab nationalism will also develop into sovereignty from Mesopotamia to Morocco.

Jewish and Arab sovereignty must clash. The Jew, if his immigration programme succeeds, must expand and that can only be accomplished at the expense of the Arab who will do his utmost to check the growth and power of a Jewish Palestine. That means bloodshed.

The British position in the Middle East is today paramount; the force of nationalism will challenge our position. We cannot befriend both Jew and Arab. My proposal is based on befriending the people who are more likely to be loyal friends — the Jews; they owe us a great deal and gratitude is a marked characteristic of that race. Though we have done much for the Arabs, they do not know the meaning of gratitude; moreover they would be a liability; the Jew would be an asset.

Palestine is the cornerstone of the Middle East, bounded on two sides by desert and on one side by the sea, it possesses the best natural harbour in the Eastern Mediterranean; the Jews have moreover proved their fighting qualities since the Roman occupation of Jerusalem. The Arab is a poor fighter though an adept at looting, sabotage and murder.

I now come to Palestine's position vis-a-vis Egypt. The Egyptians, even with superior numbers, are no match for an inferior Jewish army. But as modern weapons — tanks and aircraft — develop, offensive power rests more and more on weapon proficiency than on human bravery and endurance. That is why I regard Egypt as Palestine's potential enemy.

With Jewish and Arab nationalism developing into sovereignty and with the loss of the Canal in 1966 (only 47 years hence), we stand a good chance of losing our position in the Middle East. My suggestion to you yesterday is a proposal to make our position in the Middle East more secure.

*Colonel R. Meinertzhagen, Middle East Diary,  
London, 1959, pp. 6-7, 17-18.*

## **(5) JERUSALEM CONQUERED**

Now Jerusalem our holy city too has been conquered by the British who are gaining one victory after another in their war of conquest for the land of our fathers, the land of our hopes.

The city "which is joined together" and which "every king desires to possess" has in this war changed hands from one authority to another.

This same holy city and centre of Judaism in the past and in the future has now become a British possession — together with other towns in our country already conquered or about to be taken.

If these were normal times the question might have been asked which of the



two, Turkish or British sovereignty over Jerusalem and its population, was preferable. Judging the issue by material and spiritual criteria we should then have been either pleased or sorry.

But one thing is a long established certainty in our mind, beyond doubt: in the last resort Jerusalem will be ours. The holy city will once more, sooner or later, become a Jewish capital and whatever power happens to conquer it, does so on a temporary basis only, as far as our people is concerned. However seeing that the present victors, i.e. the British government are publicly committed to realizing our hopes of creating a "national home for the Jewish people in the land of Israel", their triumph rather than being temporary has become an eternal conquest for the Jewish people.

Though the ways of God are hidden from us and we are unable to tell whether the present advance already constitutes the final stage of our deliverance and revival, there can be no doubt that this triumph marks a tremendous step forward.

On this ground we must regard British victory as our victory. The triumph of the Jewish people and present conquest of Jerusalem is the foundation stone for the future realisation of our noblest aspirations.

This is a Divine gift — let us be happy and rejoice in it!

*Ha-Ivri, 29 Kislev 5678 (1917)*