

3 PALESTINE MISSION
A PERSONAL RECORD

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PALESTINE MISSION

CHAPTER ONE

THE ENQUIRY BEGINS

1. *A New Assignment*

IT was a Thursday evening in October 1945. I was standing in the inner lobby—just outside the debating chamber of the House of Commons—when the Chief Labour Whip, Mr. William Whiteley, came up to me. “You will not be going to Vienna,” he said. “Ernest Bevin has got another job for you, something about Palestine. You will be hearing more soon.”

I was annoyed and intrigued: annoyed because I was due that week-end to leave with a Parliamentary Delegation for Austria—a country I knew something about—intrigued because I was aware that Palestine had become a ticklish problem for the Labour Government. I remembered a little ruefully that I had said to my wife, only a few days before: “It is always a good thing for a politician to admit to ignorance. There are two subjects I shall always be totally ignorant about, India and Palestine.”

I heard nothing more of my assignment until Mr. Bevin went to the despatch box and made his famous statement on Palestine. It was a long statement and difficult to take in at first hearing; but before he sat down I knew that I had let myself in for something much bigger than I had reckoned on. I was to be one of the twelve members of an Anglo-American Committee which was to study not only Palestine but the position of the Jewish victims of Nazi persecution.

As the names of the members of the Committee had not been announced—the list was not published until December—I could not ask my friends in the Party for advice. But it was obvious that I should be away for at least 120 days just when I was settling down to my new life as a back-bench

Socialist M.P. This was not at all what I had anticipated and I went off to find Hector McNeil, Mr. Bevin's Parliamentary Secretary and a fellow journalist. I told him that I knew nothing about Palestine and was quite unsuitable for the job. Hector was as friendly and as shrewd as he always is. He assured me that I had not been selected for any knowledge I possessed. Indeed my chief qualification had been that I was not committed by any public statement about Palestine or Zionism; I would therefore approach the problem with an open mind. He added that I ought to be grateful as this was my first big chance: "It is a tough job and they want to try you out," he added. "You know perfectly well that you are not going to refuse."

In my heart of hearts I knew that he was right. But all the same I hated being uprooted all over again. I had got through the ordeal of my maiden speech, and chipped in once or twice on minor occasions. Now I wanted to build up a small but solid reputation as a reliable Party member who only spoke when he had something to say, and sat down after ten minutes. I was beginning to specialize on the motor industry—the main industry of Coventry—Germany, and the procedure of the House of Commons. I was enjoying the lack of responsibility after five years in Government Departments and military headquarters. Everything was going very well, and I did not feel inclined to be disturbed.

On the other hand, the idea of an assignment was exciting. Though I denied it to myself, that is what I had missed since I flew back from Paris to fight the election. The House of Commons was a way of life, a new experience as exciting as the first weeks at boarding school. But life on the back benches was not a *job*. Though it involved being away for four months, this Anglo-American Committee would mean that I would have a chance, not merely of making a speech, or voting, but of formulating policy. Once again I would be back in the atmosphere I liked best of all—Anglo-American teamwork. Weighing the whole thing up, I could not help admitting to myself that Hector McNeil was right. I was glad the job had been offered to me, and I had no intention of refusing it. The sooner we started the better.

2. *Background of a Committeeman*

Actually, it was nearly two months before we crossed the Atlantic to join our American colleagues and hold the first hearings of the Committee, in Washington.

I had the whole of November and December in which to begin educating myself for the job. Reflecting on my personal experience of the Palestine problem, I found that it was one-sided. I knew nothing of the Arabs, but more than I first realized about the Jews.

I was brought up in an extremely religious home. Every day, before breakfast, the six children and the maids sat in a line while my father read a passage from the Bible. Then we buried our faces in the chair seats while he prayed. At my public school—Winchester—we attended chapel twice on week-days and four times on Sundays, and I had won prizes for divinity. At school I probably knew far more about the geography of Palestine than of my own country, and Jewish history, together with the Greek and Roman classics, was the background of my whole mental life. But neither before nor during the Committee's journey was I able to relate the Holy Land of the Bible stories and of Roman history with the Palestine which was now an Anglo-American problem. True, the country of Jemal Effendi and Ben Gurion looks exactly like a backdrop to the Bible, but there the resemblance ceases.

Disregarding Bible memories, I found that I had picked up more information than I realized about Palestine. I knew that, despite previous assurances to the Arabs, the British Government in 1917, with the approval of the American Government, had issued the Balfour Declaration. I remembered that later on members of the cabinet, including Mr. Balfour and Mr. Lloyd George, had stated that their expectation at the time was that this National Home would develop into a Jewish commonwealth if the Jews seized their opportunity, and large numbers migrated to Palestine. I remembered vaguely that, despite some rioting by the Arabs, Britain, after occupying the country and driving out the Turks, began to fulfil its promises to the Jews, and that

under Winston Churchill as Colonial Secretary the mandate had been amended to exclude Transjordan, and Arab fears had been allayed by a declaration that the national home did not necessarily mean a Jewish state. Then came a complete gap in my knowledge. The next fact which came to my mind was the Nazi revolution and the sudden rise of Jewish immigration into Palestine after 1934. I was fairly clear that the Arab revolt of 1936 was a direct result of this German-Jewish migration to Palestine, though I found myself completely ignorant about the history of the revolt. Indeed, my next clear notion was the appeasement policy of 1939. I remembered the report of the debate on the White Paper, under which the British Government made immigration conditional on Arab consent. Winston Churchill had sided with the Liberal and Labour opposition in fierce denunciation of what they regarded as a breach of faith with the Jews. The White Paper had been condemned by nearly everyone, except the Chamberlainites, in the House of Commons. Then, when submitted to the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations, it had been declared incompatible with the terms of the mandate. But the outbreak of war had prevented its submission to the League Council, and it had become British policy in Palestine.

My knowledge of Palestine during the war was extremely patchy. I could recall the debate on the introduction of the Land Transfers Regulations which were as passionately denounced as the White Paper itself by leading members of the present British Government. Then there were the "Struma" and the "Patria" incidents, tragedies connected with illegal immigration, but I could not remember the details. In fact, my only recollection of Palestine during the war was the role the ex-Mufti had played in Berlin. I knew about that because I had come across it in the course of my work in SHAEF.

I have put down here as fairly as I can the extent of my knowledge because it was probably neither more nor less than the average Englishman knew at the time. Palestine had for many years been one of those wearisome subjects which were always cropping up in the papers. The English-

man was uneasily aware that it might disturb his conscience if he thought too much about it. Unconsciously, as a nation, we had avoided knowing about it, just as we had avoided knowing about India.

When I turned to the other part of our enquiry—the condition of European Jewry—I found that I was a good deal better equipped. Ever since I was a schoolboy of 14 I had visited Germany or Austria almost every year. I had spent the most formative year of my life there—in 1930–31. I was then 23 and had just taken a first class in philosophy and ancient history at Oxford. New College had elected me to a Fellowship in philosophy, and had generously given me a year off before I settled down to my life as an Oxford don. I had decided to spend that year in Germany learning German and continuing my research into Aristotle's doctrine of the soul. In October 1930 I went off to Frankfurt on Main to become the paying guest of Justizrat Fuld, an eminent German-Jewish judge, and to study at the Frankfurt University, a few hundred yards away.

Nothing happened as I planned. A few days after I got to Frankfurt I went to hear the first performance at the opera house of a new work by Kurt Weil, author of the famous German version of the *Beggar's Opera*. The performance was interrupted by a shower of stink-bombs from the gallery, and as I walked home past the railway station and the Festhalle, I was passed by a gigantic torchlight procession of strenuous, sweating Nazis. It was my introduction to modern politics.

On the day on which I was due to return to Oxford for the autumn term of 1931, Britain went off the gold standard. A German friend of mine pressed a twenty-mark note into my hand and said: "You will need it in Oxford. There will be bread riots when you get there." Twenty-four hours later I had just finished my first dinner as a member of New College senior common room. We sat around the big fire in the panelled upper room where the senior common room takes its port, and discussed various proposals for helping the country through the crisis. Balliol College had cut its salaries by 10 per cent. My college has an eighteenth-

century dislike of enthusiasts. We decided finally to abolish the savoury for dinner, and to substitute cheese and biscuits. It was my first experience of the frustration which was to haunt me until the war.

I felt that no one in England understood what was going on in Europe. Oxford believed that Adolf Hitler was a crazy lunatic, and Karl Marx an economist who had been proved wrong. I felt—and these are matters of intuition and not of logical proof—that Hitler would win in Germany, that a war was coming, and that no one in England would face the fact in time. Studying Plato, I discovered that he understood this better than anybody at Oxford. He had lived through the destruction of a great civilization by irrational, barbarian forces. I began to lecture on Plato's *Republic* and National Socialism.

From 1931 until 1937 I remained a Fellow of New College, teaching for six months of the year, and for the other six months visiting Germany. In 1934 I took to active politics and became the leader of the Labour group on the City Council. When I visited Germany in that year, the volcano had erupted and the crust of civilization had been smashed. I found that I had not a single friend left in Frankfurt or Berlin; they had all fled or gone underground, and I noticed for the first time that nearly all of them had been Jews.

The months before we declared war on Germany were a miserable period. Sometimes I feared that Chamberlain would win and that we would give way without a struggle. Sometimes I was certain war would come. Always I had a gnawing sense of frustration, and a conviction that the Government had no idea what they were up against. On the evening when Chamberlain, just before the Munich Conference, made his radio speech about the Czechs—"a far-away country of which we know very little"—I was lecturing in the little manufacturing town of Leek, to a class of a hundred silk workers. When I got to the hall, the chairman said that they had decided to listen to the broadcast before the lecture. We listened in silence, and then, before I could say a word, the chairman rose to his feet and said: "We will now stand for a minute in silence to signify our sense of the

humiliation of our country." Whenever since then I have felt desperate, I have always remembered that scene and taken comfort from the fact that the working people of Britain are sometimes less blind than their rulers.

Even after the war started, the sense of frustration continued. I spent six weeks in the crazy atmosphere of the 1939 Ministry of Information, and then resigned and went back to my desk in the *New Statesman* office. Then came the collapse of France, and the formation of the Coalition Government. In August I was summoned by Hugh Dalton, now Chancellor of the Exchequer, then Minister of Economic Warfare. He had been entrusted with the task of organizing a secret department, linked with the Foreign Office, for psychological warfare against the enemy, and asked me to take charge of the German division. I accepted at once. We began by organizing the German broadcasts of the B.B.C. during the blitz, and for the first time in my life I was completely happy. I had a real job. My knowledge of Germany was at last proving useful.

Throughout the war I thought of nothing except Germany and read and spoke as much German as English. In order to do effective propaganda, we had to feel ourselves into the psychology of the ordinary German civilians and soldiers, and to study every scrap of information about the conditions of daily life, both on the home front and in the German army. Others could afford merely to abuse National Socialism; we had to understand it completely, objectively, in all its weaknesses, but also in all its strength. Others could merely condemn the men of Vichy and other collaborators; we had to understand their mentality if we were to counter their influence. Propaganda departments, both civilian and military, had to be objective students of Hitler's New Order, and of the psychology both of our enemies and of our allies.

When the North African campaign began, psychological warfare had to go into the field. I jumped at the chance, and in April 1943 went out to Algiers to meet C. D. Jackson and William Paley—President of Columbia Broadcasting—my two American colleagues. Together we organized the leaflet and broadcast propaganda to the enemy, and also the

information services for the liberated areas. In the winter of 1943 we were all brought back to London to build up a similar organization for SHAEF, and we served together till the collapse of Germany.

In those final months of the war I felt a growing sense of excitement. At last, after six years, we were returning to that Germany which I had studied ever since my student days. We had defeated the military danger, and during the war we had grown to understand the social and psychological menace of Fascism better than ever before. Now at last, as victors, we would be able to confirm our findings at first hand. The destructive job of breaking German morale was over: we could begin the task of re-education. Our division of SHAEF was to be responsible for a small part of that work—the control of the German press, radio, films, book trade, and all other vehicles of information.

When the armies broke out across the Rhine, we began to get the first circumstantial reports on the concentration camps. Our own intelligence officers were rushed to Buchenwald, and I shall never forget the first report that I received. A young American, of German-Jewish extraction, walked smartly into my office and laid on my desk what looked like a piece of hide. "A memento from Buchenwald. Human skin for a lamp shade. You can still see the place where the tits have been planed off." Though we had heard and reported many stories of Nazi massacres of Jews and Slavs, we had never believed in the possibility of "genocide." We had interrogated countless S.S. men: we had reported their brutality and corruption: we had known that, theoretically, they were in favour of extermination, but until we saw the concentration camps and the gas chambers, we only believed it with our brains. Now we were to realize that our propaganda had fallen far behind the truth.

I was on a tour forward with Paley when V-E day was announced. We were in Heidelberg, spending the night in a luxurious hotel, with linen sheets, hot and cold water, and lines of obsequious German servants. Next morning I went to call on an old friend of mine, Professor Jaspers of Heidelberg University, one of Germany's leading philoso-

phers before the Nazis. Both because of his political views and owing to his Jewish wife he had been thrown out of the university and had lived in retirement in his tiny flat for ten years. We sat with him for two hours while he discussed with complete calmness what his feelings had been throughout the war. In and out of the room fussed his tiny Jewish wife, who could not refrain every now and then from stretching out her hands to embrace us and offer us her thanks.

He had lived with his wife in complete isolation, apart, as he told me, from a few friends among the simple people, his locksmith, his plumber and some of the shopkeepers who were kind to his wife and had made arrangements to hide her if a deportation order to Dachau was issued. Her order came four days before our troops arrived.

Twenty-four hours later I was being injected against typhus in sweltering heat, at the entrance to Dachau concentration camp. I had been reluctant to make the necessary detour to see it, but Paley, who is a Jew, was emphatic that if we were in charge of re-educating Germany, we should see it for ourselves. He was right. I had read hundreds of pages of reports from our intelligence officers: I had interrogated inmates: but until I walked through the camp myself I had not experienced what it really meant. If every member of the British Cabinet had spent that day with us, the course of history might have been different. Though I knew that it was useless to put it into words, I made some jottings that night in my diary:

"As we entered the camp we turned left to see the crematorium. We passed a long line of bullock-carts—with sullen peasants standing by. The carts were laden with corpses taken from the crematorium. The smell of lime mixed with that of corpses liquefying in the sun was nauseatingly sweet. I was so concerned with not breathing it in and not being sick that I could hardly think of anything else.

"As I had previously suspected, corpses in themselves are not particularly horrible, even half-starved corpses. After the first shock one fails to react to what is so obviously not alive and so apparently not human. Just by the crematorium

there were half a dozen camp inmates sitting in the shade of a pine tree, nonchalantly watching the corpses being arranged with pitchforks on the carts. Obviously they were completely immune to any sense of horror at the sight, and even their sense of smell apparently had been deadened.

"We made an exhaustive tour of the camp. The real horror is now the hospital where a few camp inmates are struggling to check the death rate. In packed and sweltering huts are the living dead of all ages. A Czech priest, acting as medical assistant, told us that many could be saved from death if they could be given the right diet: milk, butter and eggs. Actually, the sick were given either the camp soup—a good meal for the healthy since it is now filled with lumps of meat—or the camp porridge and rye bread. For those with diarrhoea such a diet caused acute vomiting and, according to the Czech, many had died because they could not stomach it. I asked why the butter, milk and eggs could not be provided from the rich countryside around. The Czech priest did not know, but did not seem in any way indignant that our troops had failed to provide it. One gets the feeling that these people expect nothing of life and do not yet have a sense of contact with the outside world.

"Just behind the hospital we found a special camp for angora rabbits—thousands and thousands of beautiful angora rabbits—well fed, sleek and beautifully housed in specially built hutches. I asked our guide why they had not been eaten, and he replied, 'We are ordered not to take them from the rabbit farm, so we are looking after them instead.' The rabbits are still much better looked after than the inmates. Indeed, I saw one of the inmates carefully removing the dung from the hutches.

"We were walking down the space between the work barracks and the hospital barracks when we saw a column of inmates five deep coming towards us. They were advancing, or rather tottering along, in the sweltering heat, so slowly that they scarcely seemed to move. They were obviously so ill that many of them could hardly make the distance. We asked our guide who they were. He explained that they were now going through the quarantine huts one

by one and removing out of them any inmates who were too ill and weak to look after themselves.

"Behind the marchers were one or two children's trolleys. On these were those too weak to stand, mostly three-quarters naked and ill with diarrhoea. Bill Paley turned to me and said: 'Why can't they be moved in a truck?' Our guide seemed surprised by the question. He saw nothing strange or even cruel in the idea of dying men walking or crawling 150 yards at least through sweltering heat to the hospital. He asked us to move along.

"As we did so another of those grotesque squads crept along the side of the quarantine enclosure. Looking at them one realized how little horror has to do with sympathy. Sympathy demands some common experience. Our guide glanced at a naked figure prostrate on a cart and said softly: 'Six months ago I was being dragged to hospital looking like that.'

"The abyss which separates the outside world from the concentration camp influences both sides equally. Even the most sensitive and intelligent people whom we met in Dachau seemed to accept it as the only reality, and to think of the outside world as a mirage. Similarly the incoming troops, after the first uprush of indignation, seemed to slump back into accepting Dachau, not as 32,000 fellow human beings like themselves, but as a strange monstrosity to be treated on its own standards. How else can one explain that ten days after liberation no one thinks it strange that there are no trucks to carry the dying to the hospital and no proper diet in the hospital? If a town of 32,000 people had been struck by a cyclone, an immense rescue apparatus would be organized. But these 32,000 outcasts are so remote from civilization as we know it that we are content to leave them as they are, improving slightly their living conditions!"

Dachau was the most recent, and perhaps the most violent, of a long series of experiences which all seemed to illustrate that European civilization is not a stable and settled way of life, but a thin crust, constantly threatened by the volcanic violence of vast and un-understood forces just below the

surface. Whenever an eruption occurs, the Jewish community is the first to be submerged. The life of my generation has been lived almost entirely in a period of growing barbarism, and we have been trained by events to harden ourselves in order to survive. Reflecting on Dachau, I realized that the law of survival for the individual inside the concentration camp has become the law of survival for the group, the community and the nation in the outside world. As our investigation progressed, I was to realize that the Jews, as well as their Christian persecutors, have learnt this lesson.

3. *Across the Atlantic*

The English members of the Committee met for the first time just before Christmas to receive a report that our American colleagues wished us to proceed to Washington and begin the enquiry there. I can well remember our annoyance and suspicion at the news. Did they believe that Washington was on the way to Palestine? Of course not. Their motive, we felt, obviously was to lure us into a hostile atmosphere and submit us to the full blast of Zionist propaganda. But our Chairman's reasonableness prevailed. We could hardly refuse so cordial an invitation; and moreover, if we agreed to go to Washington, they in turn could hardly refuse to visit Cairo and listen to the Arab League. We cabled our acceptance, and dispersed for Christmas.

I had expected that before leaving we should be received by the Prime Minister or Foreign Secretary and hear from them the purpose of our mission. But nothing of the sort happened either then or at any time during the next four months. Having appointed the Committee and thereby, temporarily at least, relieved himself of the responsibility for an awkward problem, Mr. Bevin seemed well content to leave the matter entirely in our hands. At the time, I was favourably impressed. This is the etiquette in the case of Royal Commissions and of Select Committees of the House of Commons. Here, too, once the appointments have been made, the Government is debarred from any contacts

with the members, unless it is decided to call members of the Government as witnesses. I concluded that Mr. Bevin must really have an open mind and be ready to accept whatever advice we offered; and I assumed that, since he had pressed for an Anglo-American Committee, and must know the strength of American support for Zionism, he must be ready to accept the consequences of a report which rejected the present line of British policy in favour of one more helpful to the Jews. But all this was pure surmise, and we sailed on the *Queen Mary* just after Christmas without any idea of British policy other than that it was our duty to achieve, if it was possible, an honest unanimity with our American colleagues. That remained our conviction until we signed our report on Good Friday, 1946.

We had comfortable quarters on the sunshine deck, and below us was packed an American Airborne Division returning home for demobilization. Since the troops were instructed day and night by loud-speaker, we were prevented from sleeping too long, and in spite of a rough crossing we held daily meetings in order to get to know each other, and to decide which were the first problems to be raised with our American colleagues.

We were a mixed bag. Our chairman, Sir John Singleton, was a judge of the High Court, young for his years, and always dressed in exquisitely cut clothes. During the war he had undertaken certain secret investigations for the Government, and this was no doubt one reason for his appointment to our Committee. From the first he proved himself to be an expert and fluent draftsman, and I often felt that he was happiest alone with his pen. Like many British judges he combined the strictest judicial impartiality with strong political opinions—he had been a Conservative Member in the 1924 Parliament. A man of sincere and simple patriotism, he showed himself throughout our investigations intensely loyal to what he conceived to be the interests of the Government, and sometimes exhibited a sensitiveness to criticisms of British policy or British officialdom which irritated our American friends. He had had no previous experience of international work of this sort. His belief in

the necessity for maintaining law and order was simple and rigid, and his natural horror of terrorism had been sharpened by his experiences during the Irish troubles.

Mr. Crick, the economic adviser to the Midland Bank, was an intellectual, whose logical mind instinctively rejected ideologies and the mystique of political movements. In his middle forties, he was a man of strong evangelical views, with a nonconformist strictness of temperament.

Sir Frederick Leggett was the only Englishman with a really wide experience of international organization. He had spent his life as Ministry of Labour conciliator in industrial disputes, and latterly as British Government representative at the International Labour Office. In both these capacities he had come to know and admire the work of Ernest Bevin, though he was not afraid to admit that he had often found him in error. As he used to explain to us, the chief lesson of his life was that you cannot force a solution of any dispute. Solutions are a matter of patience until the precise moment has come when incompatibles can be reconciled. Strongly suspicious of State interference in industrial affairs, his basic political principle was freedom of the individual and of the group to work their own problems out for themselves as far as possible.

Lord Morrison was our oldest and most experienced politician, with twenty-six years' service in the House of Commons as Labour Member for Tottenham. He had just been made a peer. Throughout the enquiry he showed a great native shrewdness, and the practical man's dislike of books and theories. Wherever he travelled Tottenham remained his yardstick.

Major Manningham-Buller was my Conservative opposite number. Son of a County family and educated at Eton and Magdalen, he had gone to the bar and worked as a pupil in Sir John Singleton's chambers. He had become Member for Daventry during the war, and had risen so rapidly that he was selected as Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Works in Mr. Churchill's caretaker Government. Tenacious of Tory principle, he sometimes felt that impatience of foreigners and of foreign ideas which is one strand of the

British Conservative tradition. He could never quite get over the shock of his Party's defeat; but he showed considerable forbearance at what he felt to be the almost unbearable failings of his Socialist colleague from the House of Commons, and at Lausanne we worked most amicably together on the final draft of the report.

The Government had supplied us with two full-time secretaries: Mr. Vincent had spent most of the war working on the Combined Boards at Washington, and still exhibited some of those characteristics which Englishmen who live any time in Washington acquire. Mr. Beeley, a professional historian, had worked at Chatham House before the war, and composed the sections of the *Annual Survey* dealing with Palestine. He now dealt with Palestinian affairs in the Foreign Office, and was loaned to us for the period of our enquiry. In private life he was a temperate advocate of the White Paper and admirer of Arab civilization. Our journey was to be his first opportunity of seeing at first hand the countries on which he had lectured for so many years.

When we surveyed each other, each of us must have asked himself why the others had been selected. Certainly if the Foreign Secretary desired to bring together six men whose views were bound to clash, but who would fight for agreement, if that were humanly possible, he had selected his team well.

On the morning on which our boat drew into New York I wrote in my diary:

"We start with a blankness towards the philosophy of Zionism which is virtually anti-Zionist. We have a feeling that the whole idea of a Jewish national home is a *dead end* out of which Britain must be extricated; that, whereas it is obvious that Arab independence in the end *must* be granted, we have not a similar obligation to permit the Jews in Palestine the fulfilment of Zionism. So the tendency is to define the problem as one of finding homes somewhere for the surplus Jews in Europe in order to cut away the Zionist case for an impossible immigration into Palestine.

"I try to argue that, in putting the problem that way round, we are begging the question. We must consider the Zionist

case on its merits; their case is *not* for helping some displaced persons who happen to be Jews, but for a Jewish national home, irrespective of displaced persons. That national home exists now in miniature, and we are pledged to assist it. In my view we cannot assist the Jews in Palestine in any way they would call assistance without violating Arab rights. *We must in fact either accept or reject Zionism as such*, putting the awkward, incompatible alternatives clearly before our Governments.

“My guess is that until we get to Palestine we shall not realize the meaning of Zionism, the dimensions of its achievement, its vitality, its refusal to be killed. While we visit Europe we shall try to keep ourselves to the simple job of finding a home for some helpless, homeless people. Only in Palestine shall we realize that this humanitarian attitude is almost irrelevant to the conflict there.

“I suspect that every attempt to find an objective economic basis for assessing the ‘absorptive capacity’ of Palestine will fail. How much population Palestine will contain is a *political* question, in which ‘objective economics’ is determined by non-economic factors. If we were able to invest £1,000,000,000 and make it our main Mediterranean base and encourage a flow of whole industries there, there is no limit to its capacity in modern conditions. That its economy would be ‘unsound’ means only that the return would be partly political and strategic. Malta is a bare rock but it has an ‘absorptive capacity’ of 250,000 because it is important to the British Navy.

“Lastly, conditioning everything is power politics. To begin with, is Britain willing to concede that she is now too weak to make the Middle East her military monopoly? Will she share control with other great powers? If so, does she want America as a defence *against* Russia, or is she ready to seek co-operation with Russia? The answer to these questions ultimately will decide the fate of Palestine.

“I am quite clear after reading the documents that historically—but not legally—the Arab case is indisputable. We did include Palestine in the area of their independence: we failed to tell the French we had done so. We negotiated

an entirely incompatible division of the spoils with France and Russia. And then, on top of all, we promised the Jews a national home.

“Why was the White Paper so indignantly received in 1939? One reason was that the Jews could rightly point out that it in fact violated the spirit and the letter of the Mandate. Malcolm Macdonald would have been on far better ground if he had frankly admitted that the Mandate, as originally conceived, had proved unworkable. Jews and Arabs just would not get along so long as the Jews could work for, and the Arabs could fear, a Jewish majority in Palestine. He should have asked for a *new Mandate*, and then his argument would not have looked like special pleading for the Arabs.

“But of course that does not explain why normal people like myself, who in 1939 would have reacted violently against the White Paper as unjust, now tend to be sympathetic to its objectives and only to regard the tactics as wrong.

“Was it that we were all on the look-out in 1939 for *appeasement* and saw the Arabs as a Fascist force to which Jewish liberty was being sacrificed? Partly, perhaps. But I suspect that six years of this war have fundamentally changed our *emotions*. We were pro-Jew emotionally in 1939 as part of ‘anti-Fascism.’ We were not looking at the actual problems of Palestine, but instinctively standing up for the Jews, whenever there was a chance to do so. Now, most of us are not *emotionally* pro-Jew, but only rationally ‘anti-antisemitic’—which is a very different thing.

“I argued yesterday that in this world of 1945 Zionist assertions that the Jews *are a nation* are really a reflex of anti-Semitism. Whereas the few survivors of European Jewry should be liberated from that awful *separateness* which Hitler imposed and reconstituted Europeans with full rights and duties, Zionism actually strengthens the walls of the spiritual concentration camp. It is only the other side of the Nazi shield, the Jewish reaction to the German disease. It is the anti-Semites and racists who want to clear the Jews out of Europe and place them together in Palestine.

“I went on to say that there may be an awful fate hanging

over the Jew in Palestine. Twice already he has been driven out. Palestine is a key point (as it has been for thousands of years) of great power politics. It is full of insecurity, particularly now when Russia has re-entered the Middle Eastern field of politics. There could not be a worse refuge and home for a persecuted people than this strategic key point in which the whole Arab world is also against them."

It was with these ideas, formed as the result of a fortnight's intensive reading, that I began conversations with our American colleagues.

CHAPTER TWO

WASHINGTON

1. *Our American Colleagues*

ON the quay at New York we found a group of American journalists insistent to know our view of General Morgan's statement. We had no idea that General Morgan had made a statement, but a glance at the morning papers showed us the attention which the American Press was devoting to the Jewish problem. General Morgan's assertion that there was an organization to move Jews out of Poland into the British and American zones had been headlined on every front page and assailed in every editorial. *P.M.*, the left-wing evening paper, seemed to have devoted most of its edition to it, and discovered a likeness between the British General and Heinrich Himmler. Our ignorance was our salvation, and we escaped from the reporters without an indiscretion.

After a night in New York we travelled on to Washington by train, and were immediately taken to our offices in the State Department, where we held our first conference with our American colleagues.

The American team, like ours, was headed by a judge. Judge Joseph Hutcheson was, in almost every way, the antithesis of Sir John Singleton. Small and wiry, informal and undiplomatic, "Texas Joe" was a "character"—and he knew it. He was nearly 70, an appeal judge of a circuit court, who must certainly have been in the running for a Supreme Court appointment. He called himself a Jeffersonian Democrat, but was in fact a conservative Texan who regarded Roosevelt and the New Deal as the ruin of the Democratic Party. He rarely admitted, except under pressure, that he had been a valiant opponent of the Ku Klux Klan and a friend of the negro when such attitudes were deeply un-