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**World War II Leaders  
and Their Visions for the Future of Palestine**

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WASHINGTON, D.C.

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J.B. AND MAURICE C. SHAPIRO ANNUAL LECTURE  
31 JANUARY 2002

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First printing, March 2002

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As a way of introducing my presentation, it would be best to explain where it fits into my current major research project. I am interested in trying to understand, as well as the available sources allow, how each of eight World War II leaders envisioned the postwar world, each of them assuming, of course, that his side would win. I also examine whether and how those visions may have changed during the war. The leaders on whom my attention is focused are Adolf Hitler, Winston Churchill, Benito Mussolini, Charles de Gaulle, Joseph Stalin, Chiang Kai-shek, Tojo Hideki, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In this presentation I intend to draw out of the broader context of their views those that relate particularly to the future of Palestine in so far as these can be identified separately even if related to their broader visions of the postwar world.

Something must be said first about the term “Palestine” in the context of the World War II era. When the Ottoman Empire was broken up in the peace settlements after World War I, a mandate, as this form of League of Nations supervised territory was called, was allocated to Great Britain in the Middle East, for a territory to be called Palestine. Initially it comprised all the territory now included in Jordan as well as the land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River. There were three types of mandates, A, B, and C, with the A-class of mandates expected to attain independence

within a relatively short time, while the B mandates were expected to take longer, and the C mandates likely to be held almost indefinitely. The Palestine mandate was in the A category as were all the former Ottoman territories allocated as mandates to Britain and France. The expectation of the 1917 Balfour Declaration about the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine was included in the terms of the mandate.

In 1922 the British government, for reasons we cannot review here, decided to partition the Palestine mandate into two separate mandates. The term Palestine was hereafter restricted to the territory between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River. Since the remainder—by far the larger area—was across the Jordan from London, it was called Transjordan in typically colonialist fashion; you will understand that the people living there did not see it that way—from their perspective it was London that was on the other side of the river—and as soon as they could, they would change its name to Jordan. In this presentation, Palestine will refer only to the smaller, western portion of the original mandate, while the then current name of Transjordan will be used for the far larger country now called Jordan.

What was the situation in Palestine in 1939? About one million Arabs and about half a million Jews lived in the mandate. In the immediately preceding years there had been an Arab revolt designed to halt Jewish immigration, drive out the Jews, drive out the British, and establish an independent Arab state as was simultaneously being established in Iraq and in much of the Arabian peninsula. The Jews living in Palestine defended themselves as best they could, while the British brought in large numbers of troops to put down the Arab uprising. By the winter of 1938–39, this had become the largest deployment of active duty British soldiers anywhere. A major change in British policy was proceeding in that winter; it had important implications for the situation in Palestine and all discussion of the mandate's future.

The government of Neville Chamberlain was moving from trying to appease Germany to preparing to fight the Third Reich if that proved necessary. This required building up a land army, not just an air force and a navy as had been the prior focus of British rearmament. Such an army would not only have to defend the Empire but by the creation of an expeditionary force assist France on the continent. This meant that a dramatic expansion was planned, an expansion that required the presence of the active troops deployed in Palestine to take part in building an army enlarged by Britain's first-ever peacetime conscription. The other side of shifting from appeasing to confronting Germany was therefore a shift from confronting to appeasing the Arabs. This was

believed necessary to free the troops in Palestine for duty in the United Kingdom, to preclude a massive siding of Arabs with the Germans in any open war, and also on the entirely correct assumption that large numbers of Muslim soldiers would have to be recruited in India for service in any and all theaters of war. While the government, therefore, was willing to make some changes in its *domestic* immigration policies after the November pogrom in Germany and to allow thousands of Jewish children—the Kindertransports—into Britain, strict limits were placed by the May 1939 White Paper on Jewish immigration into Palestine. In addition, an absolute veto on future Palestine immigration after five years was allowed to the Arabs. Furthermore, after some months delay, a dramatic restriction on Jewish purchases of land in Palestine was promulgated. Here, in other words, was the exact opposite of the “not in my backyard” syndrome. This was the situation when the Germans initiated World War II.

During World War II, only six of the eight leaders I am studying concerned themselves with the future of Palestine. Chiang Kai-shek expected the restoration to China of all its territorial losses since 1894, the early return of Hong Kong, and some influence over a renewed independent Korea, but he was not thinking of territorial expansion. He was a vehement opponent of British and French colonialism, but all the evidence points to his focusing his attention in this regard on India, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific without much reference to the Middle East. The Japanese cabinet of Tojo Hideki proposed to the German government a division of Asia at the 70<sup>th</sup> degree longitude, which the Germans accepted. That confined Japan’s concerns to the territory from Central Asia and the Indian sub-continent to the lands on the western, southern, and eastern shore of the Pacific—quite enough one might think. So I will turn to the other six.

Since Adolf Hitler started the war, I shall begin with him. In January 1939 he had first predicted that the Jews in Germany would be destroyed, and soon after had announced a similar fate for those in all of Europe. In November 1941, in a conversation to which I shall return in a moment, he explained that all Jews on earth would be killed. What do these policy expectations have to do with Palestine? To grasp this relationship, we have to look at the broader context of Hitler’s concept of the world at the end of World War II. As I have already mentioned, in addition to most of Europe, Germany would control all Soviet territory into Central Asia. That would include the oil wells of the Caucasus, a situation that fit in well with Hitler’s view that the Mediterranean and Middle East would be under Italian control. Germany’s African



colonial empire would be a wide band across the middle of the continent, while the northern third would be in Italy's empire. The German forces sent under Erwin Rommel to North Africa were, in the first instance, to salvage the North African portion of Mussolini's empire and thus the Duce's regime. But what of German military incursions into the Middle East in the course of hostilities?

During World War II, the possibility of German armies entering Palestine arose on several occasions. In 1941 and in 1942 German ground forces twice came within striking distance of Palestine from the south—that is via Egypt from Libya—and twice from the north—that is through the Caucasus. It was on the first of the possible movements of German troops into the area through the Caucasus passes that Hitler explained his views at some length to the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem in November 1941.<sup>1</sup> After informing Haj Amin el-Husseini that each European country in turn was being emptied of Jews, Hitler assured the Mufti that it would then be the turn of Jews living among “non-European” nations – in other words, the rest of the world. Assuming that the Mufti was not that concerned about Jews in places such as Tasmania and Bolivia, Hitler went into great detail about the fact that the one and only thing the Germans expected to accomplish in the Middle East was to kill all the Jews living in Palestine and other portions of the Middle East. The Mufti, who of course knew that there were then large numbers of Jews not only in Palestine but also in Syria, Iraq, and Egypt, was pleased to receive this news. Hitler pretended that after German forces had arrived on the scene Berlin would issue the public proclamation in support of Arab independence that the Mufti repeatedly asked of the Germans; Hitler was careful not to explain that the whole area would be turned over to Mussolini's Italy.

It is essential to be clear on the point that Rommel was not urged on to Cairo so that the Germans could dismantle the pyramids and reerect them in Berlin but to provide the Germans with the opportunity to carry out what they did not trust their Axis partner Italy to do sufficiently thoroughly: the killing of all Jews in Palestine, Egypt, and other parts of the Middle East.<sup>2</sup> Needless to say, even if the Allies had won the war after the temporary loss of the Middle East to the Axis, no state of Israel would ever have been created in an area in which there was not a single living Jew. As you know, this condition did not arise because the Red Army held the Germans in the Caucasus and the British army held the Germans in the Western Desert, a subject on which I will comment again later.

It is now time to turn to Benito Mussolini. Determined to change the Mediterranean into “mare nostrum,” our sea, and to reach outside it to the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans, Mussolini had anticipated war with Britain and France from 1925 on, assumed that such a conflict could be waged successfully only in an alignment with Germany, and initiated major steps in that direction in 1934–35.<sup>3</sup> The war to annex Abyssinia (Ethiopia), was a major step in this policy, and by the summer of 1938 the Italian navy was planning to seize the Seychelles islands in the Indian Ocean as an advance naval base.<sup>4</sup> When Mussolini took Italy into the World War in June 1940, his territorial aims included, among other places, Cyprus, Egypt, Iraq, Aden, and the Persian Gulf coast of Arabia.<sup>5</sup> The French and British mandates in the Middle East—and that would include Palestine—were to be nominally independent but controlled by Italy, presumably under some form of Italian control.<sup>6</sup>

There was at least initially no reason for him to be concerned about competition from Germany in any of these areas; Hitler was fully prepared to let Mussolini have what he wanted. In fact, the German dictator was willing to let Italy have the island of Crete, which the Germans had seized at the cost of heavy casualties and in spite of the contrary advice of the German navy.<sup>7</sup> As for the local population in the supposedly independent former mandates, Mussolini was as prepared to meet with and utilize the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem as was Hitler—but he was just as unwilling to make any promise of Arab independence as his German ally.<sup>8</sup> There is very little evidence of detailed attention to Palestine in the material on Mussolini’s vision of his Mediterranean empire; only the importance of the port of Haifa is repeatedly mentioned in the record. In view of Italy’s having to import virtually all of its oil, as well as his great interest in the projection of Italian power into the Indian Ocean, the focus of Italy’s leader on those aspects of taking over the Middle East and his neglect of other issues in that region are not difficult to understand. Italy had suppressed the local population in Libya with extreme violence, had followed this with a willingness to use poison gas massively in the war against Abyssinia, and could thus be expected to provide the Arab population of Palestine with an exceedingly brutal regime. By the time it acquired the mandate from its German conquerors, however, there would be no Jews alive in the area for the Italians to be concerned about.

The next leader to be considered is Joseph Stalin. In any discussion of his views, one must begin with attention to certain of the Soviet dictator’s general assumptions and the policies derived from them. He always assumed that Great Britain

and the United States would be the enemies of the Soviet Union after the war.<sup>9</sup> For most of the prewar period, he had maintained good relations with Mussolini's Italy and had recognized the annexations of Abyssinia and Albania.<sup>10</sup> He expected the alignment with Hitler's Germany to last, and carried out negotiations with Turkey on that assumption.<sup>11</sup> Stalin's instructions for Molotov when the latter was headed for Berlin in November 1940 included the proviso that in a peace with Britain that country would have to leave Egypt and the mandates.<sup>12</sup> Forced into alliance with the very countries with which he least wanted to be associated, Stalin would keep his distance to the extent possible.

The second aspect of Stalin's general orientation that has to be recalled is his differentiated view of Judaism as a religion and Zionism as a political movement. As a religion, Judaism was expected to disappear like other religions, Islam and Christianity included. Zionism, however, was seen in a different light. From Stalin's perspective, this was a political movement that might appeal to the Soviet Union's large Jewish population and had to be repressed as a dangerous, divisive, and uncontrolled form of subversion. The higher percentage of Jews than non-Jews deported from the portions of Poland annexed by the Soviet Union in 1939 in practice saved some of them from death at the hands of the Einsatzgruppen murder squads in 1941, but that fortuitous development was not a part of Stalin's expectations as he turned over other Jews who came from German-controlled areas to his good friend Adolf Hitler.<sup>13</sup>

During the first years of fighting on the Eastern Front, certainly until the late fall of 1943, Stalin was, according to all indications, prepared to make a separate peace with Germany as Lenin had done in 1918, but all Soviet soundings fell on deaf ears in Berlin.<sup>14</sup> It is not clear just how long this attitude of Stalin's lasted, but the essentially simultaneous success of the Normandy landing and of the Soviet summer 1944 offensive certainly marked its end. The victory of the Allies now looked certain, and that opened up new perspectives. There was on the one hand the opportunity to attain control of East and Southeast Europe through the advance of the Red Army; on the other hand, there might be a means of weakening an enemy of the future, namely Great Britain, by undermining its position in the Middle East. It is in this context, I believe, that Stalin's 1944 shift on the question of a Jewish state in Palestine must be seen.

By mid-August 1944 there were signs that the Soviet government was beginning to move from opposing toward favoring a Jewish state in Palestine, signs that under the circumstances are inconceivable without some hint or directive from the very

top.<sup>15</sup> Whether or not the claim of Alexander Contrast, that Stalin told him in early October 1944 that he wanted Jews to go to Palestine, drive out the British, and establish a government similar to the one he planned for Poland is acceptable as accurate, there can be no doubt about a new policy by Stalin.<sup>16</sup> There is clear evidence from the winter of 1944–45 that Stalin favored the departure of Jews from Bulgaria and Romania for Palestine.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, in February 1945 the Soviet delegation to the World Federation of Trade Unions meeting in London voted in favor of a call for the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine, and in the following month the Soviets became interested in the establishment of a consulate in the mandate.<sup>18</sup> In the same months before and after the end of the war in Europe, the Soviet Union allowed hundreds of thousands of Jews to flee Eastern Europe for DP camps in the West before their movement to Palestine, voted in the United Nations along with its block of satellites for Palestine partition, agreed to Czechoslovakia sending arms to Israel and training Israeli pilots—and simultaneously destroyed Jewish institutions within the Soviet Union.<sup>19</sup>

If one asks what was going on here, I believe the answer is clear. The support of an independent Jewish state in Palestine, accompanied by substantial Jewish immigration and armed in part with Soviet weapons, was seen as a means of subverting Britain's position in the Middle East. At the same time, all repercussions of these external developments on the situation *inside* the Soviet Union were, in Stalin's eyes, to be precluded if possible or crushed ruthlessly. That this policy would eventuate in dramatic new purges and anti-Semitic acts in the Soviet Union cannot be our subject this evening. The point that does need emphasis is that as Allied victory approached, the disruption of Britain's position in the Middle East by the creation of a Jewish state drawing large numbers of Jews fleeing from Europe looked to Stalin as a plausible and feasible alternative to the ejection of Britain from the area by Germany and Italy that he would have preferred.

Charles de Gaulle is next. In his case as in Stalin's, two general perspectives on the world have to be kept in mind when examining the way the leader of the Free French saw the particular subject of the future of Palestine. First, he was absolutely determined that the whole French colonial empire was to remain French (and, he hoped, increased). He feared British designs on portions of it—a complete delusion on his part. Directly relevant to our topic is his concern about the future of the French mandate of Syria. His worry about the possible participation of Turkish troops alongside any Free French and British units moving into the Vichy-controlled territory,

which “would gravely compromise the future,” was more realistic.<sup>20</sup> France had ceded a portion of the mandate to Turkey before the war;<sup>21</sup> he was worried—correctly as we now know—that the Turkish government had its eye on additional parts. Like the British, he had promised the Syrians independence after the war, but unlike the British, he had no intention of following up on it—as the shelling of Damascus would demonstrate for any who took his promise seriously. But his friction with Britain on this issue would affect his policy toward Palestine, and that relates to de Gaulle’s other basic vision.

As he made clear in his memoirs, he felt closer to the Soviet Union than to any of his Western allies.<sup>22</sup> A striking example of this was his policy in regard to Palestine. Before the war the Grand Mufti had found refuge under French protection in the French-controlled Lebanon. He correctly anticipated that the French government would protect him again when his anticipation of an Axis victory turned out to be mistaken. He fled to France, where de Gaulle protected him. De Gaulle refused to extradite the Mufti to Great Britain when asked, and would let him escape in the summer of 1946.<sup>23</sup> We see here a policy similar to Stalin’s: anything to weaken the position of Britain in the Middle East. Stalin wanted to use the Zionists; de Gaulle preferred to use the Grand Mufti. The diversion of Arab attention from other issues—in this case that of Syrian independence—to a focus on questions about Palestine was de Gaulle’s procedure then as it was for so many others in subsequent years.

We come next to President Franklin Roosevelt. In his case also some aspects of his position on the issues of the time have to be mentioned. A close follower of events in Nazi Germany, he had denounced the November 1938 pogrom and, alone among the powers, recalled the American ambassador from Berlin in protest. While as an individual he was the first American president who felt comfortable with persons who openly adhered to the Jewish faith—one of the few matters on which he defied his mother—as president he was bound by the immigration laws. These had been deliberately phrased and enacted by those who had defeated him and his party in order to keep out additional members of what were considered undesirable immigrants of East European Jewish background—individuals like these who previously had come to the United States in large numbers to escape the pogroms of the Tsarist regime before World War I. Furthermore, his predecessor, Herbert Hoover, had, as one of the few measures he thought appropriate for dealing with the Great Depression, ordered the adoption of procedures to implement laws designed to reduce the immigrant flow even

further. While Roosevelt could alter these procedures and did so, thereby greatly increasing the numbers actually admitted, any effort to change the laws would have been certain, in the circumstances of the time, to lead to a reduction, perhaps even an elimination, of immigration. And as Roosevelt discovered when he tried during the war to circumvent the immigration law by the use of temporary admission—what was called the Oswego experiment—there were immediate calls for his impeachment.

The other aspect of Roosevelt's views that has to be considered is his consistent and openly voiced opposition to colonialism. He had signed the law stipulating that the United States would grant the Philippines independence, and he anticipated a postwar world in which all colonies would move through a period of trusteeship to independence. He overestimated the length of time that this process would take after the end of the great conflict, but he was the only one of the eight leaders whose visions I am studying who correctly recognized and favored the general direction of subsequent events. The assumption that the mandates in the Middle East would, in this context, attain independence relatively soon must, therefore, be considered subsumed within the general framework of Roosevelt's thinking.

With this as background, it may be easier to understand the president's discussion with the Zionist leader Chaim Weizmann during their meeting on February 8, 1940.<sup>24</sup> In response to a question from Roosevelt about the possibility of Jews finding refuge in places other than Palestine, Weizmann explained at some length that only Palestine would do as a place to which Jews could go and call their own. Roosevelt said that Louis Brandeis had told him that Palestine could take in two million Jews. The president raised the possibility of compensating the Arabs in some way. In raising this question, the president, from all available evidence, was thinking of two procedures. On the one hand, many of the Arabs in Palestine would be moved out and compensated for this; on the other hand, the Arabs in the rest of the Middle East would not only become independent of their British and French masters but would be in a federation that was to include a Jewish state of Palestine.<sup>25</sup> The federation project is best discussed in the context of Churchill's view of the future of Palestine; what is significant in this connection is that both Weizmann and Lord Lothian, the British ambassador who accompanied him on this occasion, reacted positively to the concept.

In the urgencies of the war into which the United States was drawn almost two years after this conversation with Weizmann, Roosevelt retained his basic anti-colonialism but found himself obliged to subordinate those aspirations to the dire

emergencies facing Britain and the Soviet Union—two imperial powers bearing a huge share of the fight against Nazi Germany. It must be noted, however, that decisions made in this context also had implications of great significance for the future of Palestine even though they were made primarily for unrelated reasons. In April 1941 Roosevelt opened the Red Sea to American shipping by declaring it no longer a combat zone upon the British conquest of most of Italian Northeast Africa, a step that made it far easier to resupply the British army defending Egypt. Perhaps more dramatic was the President's decision in June 1942, when Tobruk fell and the Germans were advancing on Cairo, to strip an American armored division of its new tanks so that these could be sent to Egypt, where they eventually formed a vital element in Montgomery's defeat of Rommel. While these actions contributed to the British ability to keep the Germans out of Palestine from the south, the massive aid sent to the Soviet Union at the President's insistence supported the Red Army in defending the northern approach to Palestine in the Caucasus. It is presumably no coincidence that the route across the Indian Ocean and Iran carried its highest proportion of aid to the Soviets precisely during the fall of 1942, as the battle for the Caucasus raged.<sup>26</sup>

During 1942–44, Roosevelt became less optimistic about the prospect of Palestine becoming a Jewish state; the issue seemed to call for deferral.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, all the evidence points to his continued belief in and support of what in one statement he called a "free and democratic Jewish commonwealth in Palestine."<sup>28</sup> The president seems to have thought of the possibility of, jointly with Churchill, pushing the Arabs into such a solution.<sup>29</sup> It is often suggested that much of this was a political ploy for Jewish votes, but these speculations ignore two critical factors. First, in view of the high level of antisemitism in the United States in the 1930s and into the war, pro-Jewish and pro-Zionist actions and gestures were on balance far more likely to result in a net loss, not a net gain, in public support, a consequence of which Roosevelt was well aware. The second fact is that *after* his election to a fourth term in 1944, Roosevelt—who hardly expected to run for office ever again—explained to Undersecretary of State Edward Stettinius, who was about to succeed Cordell Hull as secretary of state, that "Palestine should be for the Jews, and no Arab should be in it."<sup>30</sup>

It was with these views that Roosevelt met with King Ibn Saud after the Yalta conference, and tried to persuade the Saudi Arabian ruler to accept a Jewish Palestine as a part of the reordering of the Middle East. While this meeting itself, like Roosevelt's meeting with the Sultan of Morocco, must be seen as a way of emphasizing

the American's anti-colonial views, the President utilized the opportunity to advocate the Zionist cause. He was entirely unsuccessful in this regard, but the effort shows that into what would be the last weeks of his life Roosevelt held to the concept of an independent Jewish Palestine as a part of a postwar—and post-colonial—world.<sup>31</sup>

During as before and after the war, Palestine was a British mandate, and it is to the prime minister of Britain for most of the war, namely Winston Churchill, that we must now turn. In general Churchill was a supporter of a Jewish state in Palestine against persistent bureaucratic and military opposition, but there were several important qualifications to his support. In the first place, as a lifelong advocate of and believer in the British Empire in which he had grown up, he envisioned the Zionists' establishment of a state as a support for Britain in the defense of its route through the Suez Canal; such an entity, he was certain, always would require British military assistance for the maintenance of its very existence.<sup>32</sup> Second, his support of a Jewish state was not tied to specific boundaries. He was one of the architects of the 1922 partition of the original Palestine mandate at the Jordan River. For a while he thought of all of Palestine west of the Jordan as the territory of a future Jewish state, and later moved toward a partition of the smaller mandate.<sup>33</sup> Any type or size Jewish state would serve the purpose of helping to protect the northern approach to the Suez Canal.

It is important to note that his opposition to the 1939 White Paper was by no means to its temporary limitations on Jewish immigration, but rather to granting the Arabs a veto on further Jewish immigration after five years.<sup>34</sup> With considerable understanding of the military needs of the British Empire as it moved to oppose Germany, he both voted for conscription at a time in the summer of 1939 when all the Labour and Liberal Party members in Parliament voted against it, and he certainly knew about the need to recruit soldiers in India. He objected not to the principle of appeasing the Arabs but to the extreme extent to which the White Paper went. Churchill was, as he explained to Chaim Weizmann in December 1939, thinking of a state with three or four million Jews; those beyond the then resident half million obviously having to move to Palestine after the war.<sup>35</sup> And if in the meantime a few slipped into Palestine illegally, that did not bother him too much.<sup>36</sup> What did worry him a great deal, especially during the crisis situation of 1940 after the fall of France, was the need to keep about 20,000 soldiers in Palestine. These were needed elsewhere, and, in his opinion, the Jews should be allowed arms to defend themselves so that the British and Australian soldiers could be deployed elsewhere.<sup>37</sup> Out of this thinking came the



lengthy struggle for the creation of a Jewish Legion that was discussed endlessly, objected to strenuously by British diplomats and military leaders, dropped in late 1941, but then revived on a small scale in 1944 and limited to employment in Europe, not the Middle East.

This is not the forum to review the whole tangled subject of the essentially abortive plan for a major Jewish military unit recruited in wartime Palestine and also including Jewish volunteers from other countries. What does have to be discussed is the project, however strange it may sound today, to which I already have alluded, and which came to play a major role in Churchill's thinking during the war: the so-called Philby Plan for a Jewish state in Palestine within a confederation of states led by Ibn Saud. Harold St. John Philby may be remembered today primarily as the father of the Soviet spy Kim Philby, but whether or not he really was the author of the project or merely formulated and advocated it, his name is practically invariably associated with it in the contemporary record. Philby was a British Arabist and explorer who had converted to Islam and was something of an advisor to Ibn Saud. The project named for him and discussed with Weizmann, may be summarized as follows. There would be a federation of states, independent of foreign control, which would include Syria, Palestine, Transjordan, Saudi Arabia, other portions of the Arabian Peninsula, and perhaps Iraq. Each would have its own government and ruler, but Ibn Saud would be in an over-arching position. Palestine would be a Jewish state within this predominantly Arab federation, would control issues such as immigration and land sales, would assist financially in the resettlement of Arabs living there in other portions of the federation, and would agree to some sort of status in Jerusalem analogous to what was referred to as the Vatican City precedent. For much of World War II both Churchill and Roosevelt favored such a solution of the Palestine controversy; Weizmann was clearly agreeable. There was what might best be called horror over it in the British Foreign Office, and all prospects for implementing it foundered because of Ibn Saud's rejection, whatever his initial reaction or role.<sup>38</sup>

If you wonder how intelligent men like Churchill and Roosevelt could for several years pin their hopes on the proposal that I have described on the basis of extensive contemporary evidence, you will need to consider several aspects of the situation at the time. Practically all the Arab areas were under foreign influence or control, British and French, and the promise of full independence explicit in the plan might satisfy a major part of their political hopes. The Arab government of the

federation would obviously control its foreign and defense policies. These factors, it was expected, could reconcile the Arabs to a small but independent Jewish unit within the federation. The Jews would finally have their own state in Palestine. That state could serve as a refuge for Jews from Europe. Furthermore, at a time when there were more Jews living in Arab countries than in Palestine, the prospect of Jews moving from Arab lands inside and outside the federation into Palestine at the same time as Arabs from Palestine moved to other portions of the federation could be thought of as a plausible form of population exchange. All this is not to defend a plan that at first sight looks somewhat ridiculous. It does however suggest that its practical implementation might well have been no more difficult than the implementation of the 1947 United Nations partition plan turned out to be.

As it became increasingly obvious that the central figure in the federation plan, Ibn Saud, was not willing to play the role that the plan assigned to him, Churchill turned, rather reluctantly it would appear, back to a partition concept. Somewhat like the Peel Commission's 1937 idea of dividing the Palestine mandate into separate Jewish and Arab states, with some residual area under British or international control, such a proposal was to be and was worked on by a committee of the British Cabinet that Churchill created. He appointed a number of members known to sympathize with his own pro-Zionist views and therefore presumably expected the committee to come up with a partition plan more favorable to the Jewish position than the Peel proposal, especially in the South where Churchill believed that the Negev could be developed by the Jewish community. The committee struggled with the partition concept for much of 1943 and 1944 in the face of endless hostility from the Foreign and Colonial offices as well as the British military. Churchill himself remained committed to a Jewish state into November 1944.<sup>39</sup>

The assassination of Lord Moyne by Lohamei Herut Yisrael (the Stern Group) on November 6, 1944, ended not only the life of the British Minister of State in Cairo but also Churchill's support of the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. For years the Prime Minister had struggled with military, civilian, and even his own party-member opponents of a Jewish state of any sort, but upon the murder of his friend and colleague, Churchill in effect gave up. No new partition plan was ever formally presented by the Cabinet Committee; the whole project was allowed to evaporate with the consent of the Prime Minister. Churchill had mused about turning over the troublesome mandate to some other authority; he now simply dropped the subject. His

defeat in the July 1945 election brought to power the Labour Party, whose ministers had been strong advocates of a Jewish state in Palestine while in the coalition cabinet during the war, but who now quickly adopted the opposite policy once in charge themselves. But that is another story. When Churchill returned to office in 1951 the whole Palestine issue had been transformed by the developments of the intervening years.

The hopes and plans of Hitler and Mussolini were quite literally crushed by the Allies, whose victory saved not only the Jews of Palestine but of the balance of the whole world from the fate the Germans had intended to visit upon them. The French colonial empire in the Middle East that de Gaulle had hoped to reestablish has vanished, and Stalin's Soviet Union is no more. As Britain's empire dissolved in the postwar years, the United Kingdom in effect abdicated its mandatory authority to the United Nations. The state of Israel that emerged out of the Palestine mandate is not quite the one that Roosevelt and Churchill had hoped for during World War II, but one might say that it bears a certain resemblance.

Notes

1. The record of the Hitler-Mufti meeting is printed in *Akten zur deutschen auswärtigen Politik*, Series D, Vol. XIII, 2, No. 515.
2. See the discussion of the killing of Jews in Greece in Gerhard L. Weinberg, *Germany, Hitler, and World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 236; also David Steinberg, *All or Nothing: The Axis and the Holocaust 1941–43* (London: Routledge, 1990).
3. Robert Mallett, *The Italian Navy and Fascist Expansion, 1935–1940* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), pp. 9, 19, 110–11.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 132.
5. MacGregor Knox, *Hitler's Italian Allies: Royal Armed Forces, Fascist Regime, and the War of 1940–1943* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 78; cf. Knox, *Mussolini Unleashed: Politics and Strategy in Fascist Italy's Last War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 38–40, for an earlier explanation by Mussolini of his far-reaching territorial aims.
6. Knox, *Mussolini Unleashed*, p. 138.
7. Gerhard Schreiber, *Revisionismus und Weltmachtstreben: Marineführung und deutsch-italienische Beziehungen 1919 bis 1944* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1978), p. 340.
8. Zvi Elpeleg, *The Grand Mufti: Haj Amin Al-Husseini, Founder of the Palestinian National Movement* (London: Frank Cass, 1993), pp. 64–9.
9. Alexander Dallin, "Allied Leadership in the Second World War: Stalin," *Survey* 21 (1975): 11–19, esp. 16–18.
10. Knox, *Mussolini Unleashed*, p. 64.

11. Stalin is supposed by some to have feared a British entrance into the Black Sea in 1940–41. Haslam's piece in Ann Lane and Howard Temperley, eds., *The Rise and Fall of the Grand Alliance, 1941–45* (London: Macmillan, 1995), pp. 30–2; Gabriel Gorodetsky, *Grand Delusion: Stalin and the German Invasion of Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

12. A full text of the directive may be found in Gerd R. Ueberschär and Lev A. Bezymenskij, eds., *Der deutsche Angriff auf die Sowjetunion 1941: Die Kontroverse um die Präventivkriegsthese* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgemeinschaft, 1998), pp. 174–76.

13. Arno Lustiger, *Rotbuch: Stalin und die Juden* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1998), pp. 94–7. This is true even though some thirty thousand died in the course of the deportation.

14. See Gerhard L. Weinberg, "Zur Frage eines Sonderfriedens im Osten," in Roland G. Foerster, ed., *Gezeitenwechsel im Zweiten Weltkrieg? Die Schlachten von Ch'arkow und Kursk im Frühjahr und Sommer 1943 in operativer Anlage Verlauf und politischer Wirkung* (Hamburg: Mittler, 1996), pp. 173–83.

15. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, et al., eds., *Documents on Israeli-Soviet Relations, 1941–1953* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), Vol. I, No. 37, pp. 79–81; cf. *ibid.*, No. 43, n. 5.

16. Alexander Contrast, *The Back Room: My Life with Krushchev and Stalin* (New York: Vantage Press, 1991), pp. 131–32, 136–37, 140, 193.

17. *Documents on Israeli-Soviet Relations*, Vol. I, No. 48, n. 2, and No. 50.

18. *Ibid.*, Nos. 44, 46.

19. Lustiger, pp. 182–87.

20. Charles de Gaulle, *War Memoirs*, Vol. I: *The Call to Honor, 1940–1942, Documents* (New York: Viking, 1955), p. 111.

21. Gerhard L. Weinberg, *The Foreign Policy of Hitler's Germany, 1937–1939: Starting World War II* (Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity Books, 1993), p. 591.

22. De Gaulle, p. 252.

23. Elpeleg, pp. 74–7.

24. See the account in *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, Series B, Vol. II, No. 46.

25. Ronald W. Zweig, *Britain and Palestine During the Second World War* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1986), p. 155; John Morton Blum, *From the Morgenthau Diaries*, Vol. III, *Years of War 1941–1945* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967), December 3, 1942, p. 208.

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27. William Roger Louis, *Imperialism at Bay: The United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire, 1941–1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), pp. 54–5.

28. Roosevelt to Sen. Robert Wagner, October 15, 1944, for the 47th Zionist Organization of America convention, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1944*, Vol. V, pp. 615–16.

29. *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, Series A, Vol. XXI, p. 39.

30. Thomas Campbell and George Herring, eds., *The Diaries of Edward R. Stettinius, Jr.* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1975), November 10, 1944, p. 170.

31. Charles E. Bohlen, *Witness to History, 1929–1969* (New York: Norton, 1973), pp. 203–4; *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, Series A, Vol. XXI, No. 293, n. 4.
32. Raymond A. Callahan, *Churchill: Retreat from Empire* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1984), p. 29; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 211–13.
33. Louis, pp. 53–4.
34. Michael J. Cohen, *Churchill and the Jews* (London: Frank Cass, 1985), pp. 180ff.
35. *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, Series A, Vol. XIX, No. 161, n. 4.
36. Martin Gilbert, ed., *The Churchill War Papers*, Vol. III *1941: The Ever-widening War* (New York: Norton, 2000), p. 1171.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 419, 435, 643; Cohen, pp. 204ff.
38. On the Philby plan see Cohen, pp. 227–42; Nicholas Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle: The Struggle for the Holy Land 1935–1948* (New York: Putnam's, 1979), pp. 144, 148–49; Peter Gross, *Israel in the Mind of America* (New York: Knopf, 1983), pp. 142–44, 149–55; Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error: The Autobiography of Chaim Weizmann* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), pp. 427–28, 432–33; *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, Series A, Vol. XX, No. 129, Vol. XXI, Nos. 106, 118, Series B, Vol. II, Nos. 42, 54, pp. 428–29.
39. Cohen, pp. 242–58; Bernard Wasserstein, *Britain and the Jews of Europe 1939–1945*, 2d ed. (London: Leicester University Press, 1999), pp. 299–305; Zweig, pp. 174–75; *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann*, Series A, Vol. XXI, Nos. 86, 225, Series B, Vol. II, Nos. 71, 77. It may be worth noting that because the territory allocated to the Jews was clearly going to be smaller than Churchill had originally contemplated, Churchill brought up the idea of converting portions of the former Italian colonies of Eritrea, Tripolitania, or Cyrenica into annexes of the Jewish state to provide space for Jewish refugees to settle.

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