

NOVEMBER 5, 1938: P. 1

## PALESTINE—

### Revolt in the Desert Plagues an Empire



#### *Jewish Girls Did Their Share of Fighting*

**S**HEM, son of Noah, lived 600 years and begat sons and daughters. He was the first Semite. Two years after the Flood, at the hale age of 100, Shem had a son named Arphaxad.

Of the resulting lineage was born Abraham, who had two sons. The elder was Ishmael, son of the Egyptian maidservant, Hagar. The other was Isaac, son of Abraham's wife Sarah. Because Sarah was unwilling that the son of her maidservant should be heir equally with her own son, Hagar and Ishmael were cast out into the desert. There, according to the Old Testament book of Genesis, Ishmael "grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer."

In Palestine today, there are 900,000 Arabs who trace their origin back to Ishmael. Like Ishmael, they dwell in the desert, and their aim with a modern rifle, if not with a bow and arrow, is excellent. In Palestine, too, are 400,000 Jews who trace their family tree to Isaac. Since the World war, and especially for the past two years, the sons of Ishmael and of Isaac have been bombing, boycotting, shooting and slandering each other in an effort to settle their common claim to 10,000 square miles of burning sand and green oasis which the world calls the Holy Land.

**ISHMAEL, ISAAC:** In modern times the Arabs hold the claim of precedence. Like Ishmael, they were there first. In 1918, before the tides of Jewish Zionist immigration had begun, there were six or seven Arabs to every Jew in Palestine. For 13 centuries Arab plows had turned Palestine's holy, sandy soil. By possession—proverbially nine points of the law—Palestine in 1918 was an Arab land.

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### *With Guns and Grenades, British Tommies Sought to Restore Order in the Holy Land*

But the Jews also had a claim. Like Isaac, they felt themselves to be the legitimate heirs to the lands of Abraham. Their claim was based on the fact that Palestine had cradled their race and religion, and the further fact that up to 70 A. D. when Roman legions sacked Jerusalem and started 4,000,000 Jews on their long wanderings, the majority race in Palestine for a thousand years had been Hebrew.

Last week, with 20th century bullet and hand grenade, Arab and Jew were savagely re-enacting the feud of their Biblical ancestors; and Britain, who had fathered the rival Arabic and Jewish claims, was cast in the uneasy role of Abraham.

It was an Englishman, the half-legendary Colonel T. E. Lawrence, who persuaded the Arabs during the World war to rebel against Turkish rule. In return for this aid to the Allies, the Arabs got a British guarantee of self-rule. While these things were happening in Arabia, however, British Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour was negotiating in London with the leaders of the Jewish national movement known as Zionism. Twenty-one years ago this week, on Nov. 2, 1917, Balfour publicly put the British government on record as favoring "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people."

Soon after the war it became apparent that Bedouin and Zionist were incompatible. Their two nationalisms, fanned by the fanaticism of the war, could not exist peaceably side by side. Faced with deciding which of its Palestine promises to keep, Britain tried after a fashion to keep both. First one race, then the other, was favored.

Result of this typically British policy of "muddling through" was to sharpen the hatred of Arab for Jew, of Jew for Arab, and of both for Britain. Five years ago, under the pressure of anti-Semitic persecution in Germany and central Europe, Jewish immigration to Palestine swelled phenomenally. In 1934 there were 48,000 immigrants. In 1935, there were 66,000—almost as many Jews as all Palestine had contained in 1920. Meanwhile the British had fallen out with Mussolini over Ethiopia. Italian money and guns began to circulate on the Arabian peninsula. Palestine's angry Arabs, who saw in the increasing Jewish

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population a permanent bar to their own dreams of independence, rumbled threats of *jehad*, holy war.

Palestine's *jehad* has been going on now for more than two years. It was intensified in July, 1937, by publication of the British Blue Paper recommending partition of Palestine into three states—a solution that pleased neither Arab nor Jew (PATHFINDER, July 24, 1937). Between July 1 and August 31 this year the war killed or seriously wounded an average of 20 persons a day. Due to an extreme British censorship, however, many newspaper-readers well versed on events in Spain and China have been only dimly aware that there was a war in Palestine.

**MacDONALD, MacMICHAEL:** By last week Palestine's relatively unpublicized war—involving only 1,400,000 people, fewer than live in the city of Los Angeles—was a threat of immediate urgency to the world's mightiest temporal power, the British Empire. As Britain's Cabinet met at 10 Downing Street, Czechoslovakia and the Munich pact were topics of the past. Rearmament, even Spain, was dismissed with a word. Instead of Prime Minister Chamberlain, young Colonial Secretary Malcolm MacDonald did the talking. In general, the gist of what he said was this:

In Palestine proper there are only 900,000 Arabs, but on three sides of Palestine and in North Africa across the Suez canal are 30,000,000 Arabs whose eyes are fixed on Palestine. The Arabs of Palestine are Moslems. In the world there are about 175,000,000 Moslems, and 60,000,000 of them are in the most vital sector of the British Empire, India. Not only Jews and Christians, but Moslems as well hold Jerusalem holy. It was there, according to the Koran, that Mohammed ascended into the highest heaven. Among Moslem sanctuaries, only Mecca—birthplace of Mohammed—is more sacred than Jerusalem.

The Arab revolt in Palestine, which began as a protest against Zionist immigration, has developed into something far more serious: a war against British imperialism. Should it develop further into a pan-Arabic, pan-Moslem war it would profoundly endanger the Empire because the Suez canal, 100 miles of steamy water dug out of the core of the Arab Moslem world, controls the Empire's complex mesh of communications. Before taking up the problem of Palestine's future, therefore, the Arab revolt must be crushed at all costs . . .

So spoke MacDonald in Downing Street. While MacDonald spoke, Sir Harold MacMichael, Royal Commissioner for Palestine, acted. British tanks trundled through the mud of remote Palestinian villages. British planes droned in unceasing patrol above Palestine's borders. Into the filthy, winding streets of old Jerusalem, wearing rubber-soled sneakers for sure footing on the cobbles, 20,000 British Tommies

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*Englishmen All:*

*Balfour, MacMichael, MacDonald, Lawrence  
(l. to r.) Played Vital Roles*

padded. An Arab rifle on a minaret picked off one Tommy for the first British casualty of the war. But in Jerusalem and elsewhere the rebels had to give way. The authority of the mightiest empire on earth moved to stamp out the revolt in the desert and bolster British prestige in the Near East.

Mile for square mile, Palestine has cost the British government more money in police expenditure since the World war than any other portion of the Empire. Strictly speaking, it is not a part of the Empire at all, but a League of Nations mandate. As executor of the mandate, Britain is supposed to tutor the Palestinians in self-government until such day as they are able to rule themselves.

Why, then, did Britain tangle herself in conflicting promises and undertake grave expense and responsibility in Palestine, if the country was to be free some day anyway? Sheer British benevolence cannot explain it, nor can the potash, sulphur, livestock and citrus fruits which make up Palestine's few pitiful resources. The answer lies rather in Palestine's geographical position.

For the same reason that the British fought the French over Egypt, and fought the Egyptian army itself for the privilege of guaranteeing "law and order" and "full enjoyment of liberty" to Egypt, Britain fought with arms and diplomacy for Palestine. Halfway station on the air route to India, outlet for Mesopotamian oil, Palestine is primarily important because her military bases, with those of Egypt, flank the "lifeline of Empire," the Suez canal. While not absolutely indispensable—there is still the route around Africa—Suez is the quickest naval passage to India. It is therefore of such immense strategic value that if Britain lost the canal, the sun might soon set on her farflung empire.

**THE GRAND MUFTI:** Among those who would like to see that imperial sunset, none is more active than a genial, 46-year-old Arab who is Grand Mufti of Jerusalem. Member of a powerful family which has lived in Jerusalem since it was conquered by the Arabs in 636, and which claims direct descent from Mohammed, Haj Amin el Husseini started his career as an officer of artillery in the Turkish

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army. When the World war began and the Grand Sheriff of Mecca, with T. E. Lawrence as his adviser, began the fight for Arab freedom, Husseini deserted the Turkish army to join the rebels. After the war he went back to Jerusalem where he set about making trouble for Britons and Zionists.

His power grew by shrewd maneuvers. In 1922 the head of the Moslem Church appointed him Grand Mufti, a position of Moslem prestige. In the same year he was elected president of the Supreme Moslem Council, a position which gave him civil as well as religious authority. His term was supposed to be for four years—but Husseini never called another election. In 1936 he became head of the Higher Arab Committee, formed to combat the increasing Zionist immigration.

When the report of the British Royal Commission headed by Earl Peel was published in July of last year, Husseini felt his power slipping. The Commission recommended that Palestine be trisected. Naval bases, the Jerusalem-Jaffa road, and the cities of Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Nazareth were to remain in British hands. Galilee, the fertile Esdraelon valley, and Haifa, best natural harbor on the coast, were to form a Jewish state the size of Delaware. The rest of Palestine, roughly two-thirds of the whole, was to be joined to the adjacent Arab state of Trans-Jordan.

Aside from the fact that the Arab share was mostly desert, Husseini's chief objection to the plan was that it would have transferred his power to Emir Abdullah of Trans-Jordan. Today Abdullah holds aloof from Husseini's rebellion. Nearly every other Arab leader is supplying sympathy if not actual aid, for Husseini's cause is a popular one in the Near East.

A fugitive from British law, Husseini has his headquarters in Syria. There he personally handles any funds or advice which may flow in from such sources as his good friend, Mussolini. He also issues orders to the Palestine Arabs whose revolt is a knot in Britain's imperial lifeline.

**WAR, ZIONISM:** The World war created the Palestine problem just as it created, for example, the Czechoslovak problem. War awoke nationalist sentiment among the Czechs and Slovaks of Austria-Hungary, the Arabs of Turkey—and the Jews all over the world. Zionism, a movement which aimed to revive religious faith by establishing in Palestine a homeland where Jews should be welcome "by right" and not "by sufferance," gained thousands of converts. (From a Hebrew word meaning "heavenly city of God," Zion is the name of a hill in Jerusalem on which Solomon's temple stood.)

In 1896 a pamphlet, *The Jewish State*, had appeared from the pen of a Viennese Jewish playwright, Theodor Herzl. In it Herzl proposed that the Sultan of Turkey permit a tribute-

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paying Jewish state to be set up in Palestine. In 1902, the Zionists negotiated with Britain for a section of the Sinai peninsula of Egypt, but Egypt objected so violently that the plan was dropped. In 1903, after brutal pogroms had occurred in Russia, Britain considered opening East Africa to Jewish settlement, but a few hundred English colonists living along the coast protested against the introduction of "undesirables." In the end, the British Foreign Office offered steamy, inland Uganda to the Zionists.

The offer was turned down, for two reasons: (1) a Zionist investigating committee found that white men did not live long in Uganda, situated as it was on the equator; (2) most Zionists clung to the hope of returning to Palestine. As Dr. Chaim Weizmann, Zionist president, explained to the Peel Commission 33 years later:

We had the rope around our necks and yet when this offer was brought to the Zionist Congress the offer was . . . refused . . . for one reason only: "It is not Palestine and it never will be. We have waited 2,000 years and we shall wait a few more years and in the fullness of time God will keep His promise to His people." This tenacity, this steadfastness is, my Lord and gentlemen, perhaps our misfortune. If it had disappeared there would be no Jewish problem. But here we are. It is our destiny . . . We are a stiff-necked people . . .

The Jewish National Fund began to buy up land in Palestine about 1908. The first Jewish colonists entered without fanfare and settled down on good terms with the Arabs. A tiny numerical minority, they constituted no threat to the Moslem theocracy.

No sooner had the Turks joined the Central Powers in the World war, however, than Zionism set to work to create a true national refuge. Dr Weizmann called at the British Foreign Office. In 1917, Balfour made his epochal declaration:

His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a home for the Jewish people and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil or religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine.

As perspiring British statesmen have since pointed out, the Balfour Declaration was not a promise to make Palestine Jewish but merely to create *in Palestine* a Jewish national home. Even this pledge Britain's Colonial Office would gladly forget today, if it could. In 1917, however, Balfour's move was regarded as politic. In return, the British got the moral and

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† Many influential Jews, to be sure, opposed Zionism as an attempt to create "an international Ghetto." Dr. Sylvain Levy, French scholar, told the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 that he considered Zionism an impracticable and dangerous experiment. Other eminent Jews, such as the French philosopher Henri Bergson, argued that the best way for the Jew to achieve equality was to work for it in the country of which he was a citizen.

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financial support of organized Jewry, including that of 4,000,000 U. S. Jews,† and of liberal humanitarian thinkers in all countries.

Whatever the design behind the Declaration, the Jews hailed it from the beginning as sanction for a national Hebrew state. Writing his *History of Zionism*, Nahum Sokalow looked into the future: "The Jews have grown tired of their role as the homeless Chosen People and would prefer to be a self-supporting small nation with a quiet spot of earth for themselves..."

**"QUIET SPOT":** The spot for which the Jews had yearned proved to be about as quiet as a live volcano. Palestine was not an empty country waiting to be colonized. It was a country only 600 square miles larger than Vermont, and more than twice as populous. Its Arab inhabitants were as outraged by Zionism's 2,000-year-old historical claims as Spaniards would be if the Moors should flock back to Spain on the excuse that they had occupied it from 711 to 1492.

In the mosques, revolutionary sentiment spread. The Arabs prepared to sabotage all the efforts of well-meaning British officials to start the new state off on a basis of mutual Arabic-Jewish understanding.

The first Royal Commissioner for Palestine was appointed when military rule ended in 1920. Announcement of his name was received by the Arabs with stunned unbelief. Sincere though he was, just though he tried to be, the Right Hon. Sir Herbert Samuel was a Jew, and for that tactlessness of his birth he could not be forgiven. Even the British Tommies had a song about it—

And they sold the Holy City  
To the Zionist Committee . . .

**TODAY AND TOMORROW:** Jewish capital has brought prosperity to Palestine and the Arabs have shared in that prosperity, but in such provisions as contracts of Zionist colonies forbidding employment of Arab labor, the Arabs see a plot to crowd them out of their national life. Jewish farmers, with scientific methods and hard work, have made barren Palestine one of the chief citrus fruit-growing countries of the world; but the Arabs point out that Jewish farmers are subsidized by foreign dollars, an advantage not enjoyed by Arab farmers.

A new twist to the Palestine situation appeared last July. Four Arabs were killed when a bus was blown up in Jerusalem. In the resulting inquiry, Solomon Ben Josef, an 18-year-old Jew, was condemned under a new law that made the possession of firearms a capital offense. The British offered to commute the sentence if all Jewish organizations would publicly appeal for a policy of non-violence. Ben Josef's own faction, the Revisionists, refused, and the boy was hanged.

These Jewish Revisionists model

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their organization on that of their own enemies, the Nazi storm troops. Until uniforms were forbidden, they even wore brown storm-trooper uniforms. Their members are youths whom persecution has made old before their time. Many of them are girls, trained in war at the barricades of fortified Zionist towns. Up to this year more Jews than Arabs have been killed in Palestine. The Revisionists are determined to reverse the ratio. Their motto is the old Mosaic law, "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." Their movement adds one more irreconcilable element to the already hopelessly embittered Holy Land.

As the country with the largest Jewish population in the world, the United States is deeply concerned with Palestine's problem. In 1919 Woodrow Wilson approved the Zionist idea. Last week President Roosevelt expressed a hope that Britain would keep Zionist immigration open (see page 4). All humane Americans echo the belief of Chaim Weizmann that "there should be one place in the world, in God's wide world" where the hunted Jew can live without fear.

Whether that place can possibly be Palestine is, however, highly doubtful. Palestine already has an unemployment problem. Obviously she cannot shelter all the 7,000,000 Jews who live in Europe's persecution belt. Big America, who carefully restricts her own immigration, hardly has the right to demand that the Arabs of small, crowded Palestine accept an immigration which would make them a minority in their own country.

Within the next few months, while Britain's army is reconquering Palestine, Britain's cabinet will have to decide what to do with the conquest. Whatever the decision, it will have to be enforced with arms. For the land that three great religions call holy, the land that has affected the history of mankind more profoundly than any similar area on earth, not even the most optimistic prophet can foresee a future of peace.

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