How Palestine Became Israel

IN the late 1800s a small, fanatic movement called "political Zionism" began in Europe. Its goal was to create a Jewish state somewhere in the world. Its leaders settled on the ancient and long-inhabited land of Palestine for the location of this state.[1]

Palestine's population at this time was approximately ninety-six percent non-Jewish (primarily Muslim and Christian).[2]

Over the coming decades Zionist leaders used various strategies to accomplish their goal of taking over Palestine:

1. Encouraging Jewish immigration to Palestine, partly through the invention of such deceptive slogans as "a land without a people for a people without a land," when, in fact, the land was already inhabited. Since the majority of Jews were not Zionists until after WWII, Zionists used an array of misleading strategies, including secret collaboration with the Nazis, to push immigration.[3]

2. Convincing a "Great Power" to back this process. By turn, Zionists approached the Ottomans, the British, and the U.S. to further their cause. While the Ottomans turned them down, the British (being promised that American Zionists would push the U.S. to enter World War I on the side of England) eventually acceded, as did the U.S. (due to concerns of politicians like Harry Truman that they would lose elections otherwise).[4]

3. Buying up the land (sometimes through subterfuges), proclaiming it Jewish for all eternity, and refusing to allow non-Jews to live or work on the purchased land. This was called "redeeming" the land and was financed by a variety of means, including by such wealthy banking families as the Rothschilds.[5]

4. Violence, if such financial dispossession should fail or prove too slow – as it did.[6]

In the 1930s, Jewish land ownership had increased from approximately 1% to just over 6% of the land, and violence had increased as well. With the emergence of several Zionist terrorist gangs (whose ranks included a number of future Prime Ministers of Israel), there was violent conflict. Numerous people of all ethnicities were killed – then, as now, the large majority of them Christian and Muslim Palestinians.[7]

Population of Palestine in Late 1800s

- Christian Palestinians
- Muslim Palestinians
- Jewish

4% 10%
86%

Historic Palestine, the land now occupied by the state of Israel, was a multicultural society. During the 1947-49 War, Israel committed at least 33 massacres and expelled over 750,000 Palestinians.

THE CATASTROPHE

This growing violence culminated in Israel's ruthless 1947-49 "War of Independence,"in which at least 750,000 Palestinian men, women, and children were expelled from their homes by numerically superior Israeli forces – half before any Arab armies joined the war. This massive humanitarian disaster is known as 'The Catastrophe,' *al Nakba* in Arabic.[8]

Zionist forces committed 33 massacres and destroyed 531 Palestinian towns. Author Norman Finkelstein states: "According to the former director of the Israeli army archives, 'in almost every village occupied by us during the War... acts were committed which are defined as war crimes, such as murders, massacres, and rapes'...Uri Milstein, the authoritative Israeli military historian of the 1948 war, goes one step further, maintaining that 'every skirmish ended in a massacre of Arabs.'"[9]
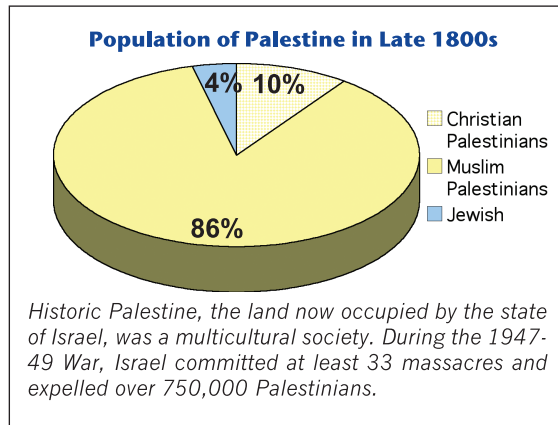
Count Folke Bernadotte, a former official of the Swedish Red Cross who saved thousands of Jews during World War II and was appointed U.N. mediator in Palestine, said of the refugees: "It would be an offence against the principles of elemental justice if these innocent victims of the conflict were denied the right to return to their homes."[10] Bernadotte was assassinated by a Zionist organization led by future Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.[11]

INJUSTICE CONTINUES

Over the 60 years since Israel's founding on May 14, 1948, this profound injustice has continued. Palestinian refugees are the largest remaining refugee population in the world.

1.3 million Palestinians live in Israel as "Israeli citizens," but despite their status as citizens, they are subject to systematic discrimination. Many are prohibited from living in the villages and homes from which they were violently expelled, and their property has been confiscated for Jewish-only uses. In Orwellian terminology, Israeli law designates these internal refugees as "present absentees."[12]

In 1967 Israel launched its third war and seized still more Palestinian (and other Arab) land. Israel also attacked a U.S. Navy ship, the USS Liberty, killing and injuring over 200 Americans, an event that remains largely covered-up today, despite efforts by an extraordinary array of high-level military officers and civilian officials to expose it.[13]

Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip – the final 22% of mandatory Palestine – and began building settlements for Jewish Israelis on land confiscated from Palestinian Muslims and Christians. It has demolished more than 24,145 Palestinian homes since 1967. In 2005 Israel returned Gazan land to its owners, but continues to control its borders, ports, and air space, turning Gaza into a large prison, where 1.5 million people are held under what a UN Human Rights Commissioner described as "catastrophic" conditions.

Over 7,000 Palestinian men, women, and children are imprisoned in Israeli jails under physically abusive conditions (many have not even been charged with a crime) and the basic human rights of all Palestinians under Israeli rule are routinely violated. Some prisoners tortured by Israel have been American citizens. In the violence that began in fall, 2000 through Feb. 5, 2009, Israeli forces killed 6,348 Palestinians; Palestinian resistance groups killed 1,072 Israelis. Israel's military, the fourth most powerful on earth possesses hundreds of nuclear weapons.[14]

AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT

American taxpayers give Israel more than $10 million per day[15] even though surveys reveal that 73% of Americans oppose taking sides on Israel-Palestine. Because of Israel's powerful US lobby, Congress gives far more money to Israel than to all of sub-Saharan Africa put together. In its

70 years of existence, Israel, the size of New Jersey, has received more U.S. tax money than any other nation. While most Americans are unaware of these facts (studies have shown that media report on Israeli deaths at rates up to 13 times greater than they report on Palestinian deaths) governmental actions are making Americans responsible for a continuing catastrophe of historic proportions – and which is, in addition, creating extremely damaging enmity to the US itself. Israel partisans have played a significant role in promoting US attacks on Iraq and Iran.[16]

As more Americans learn the facts, there is a growing bipartisan, multi-ethnic movement to counter Israel's US lobby, which has long held a vicegrip on American Mideast policies.

✱ Footnotes online at IfAmericansKnew.org