

The Cantonization of Palestine

A COMPARISON WITH SWITZERLAND

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At certain periods schemes for the cantonization of Palestine come up, as it were, from a spontaneous impulse, and are being advanced as a possible solution of the dilemma caused by the presence of two races in one land.

In spite of the doubting attitude of some official circles towards this project, which has again become apparent lately, articles in the press and even books continue to appear in favour of some such solution.

The most prominent contribution to this issue has been that of Mr. Archer Cust, a former high official of the Palestine Government, who in an article in "The Spectator" proposed to divide the whole territory under the Mandate — Palestine and Trans-Jordan — into two districts or "cantons," one Jewish, one Arab. Again, Mrs. Stewart Erskine in her book which treats of the formation of an Arab and a Jewish state declares: "...if the cantonization of Palestine is ever to take place, it is important that it should take place at once." In his latest book, which is also the last book dealing with the problem, Mr. Douglas Duff, a former police officer in Palestine, has made a contribution of his own towards the cantonization project. Finally there are a good many people who believe that something on the lines of cantonization will form the basis of the recommendations of the Royal Commission now at work in Palestine.

This is not the place to develop in detail the several proposals which have been advanced in relation to geographical boundaries, areas, mutual economic guarantees and provisions for migration from one canton to the other. Suffice it to say that the whole scheme has undoubtedly been inspired by the example of the Federal Swiss Constitution, and the obvious question is whether it is possible to transplant that system to Palestine. Generally speaking, there seems to be no reason why political systems should not be transplanted. It is a fact, for instance, that the English parliamentary institutions were widely copied during the 19th and 20th centuries.

On the other hand, it has to be admitted that constitutional forms, when transferred to a different soil, are apt to change their character, and sometimes their substance, so that identical terms may conceal a totally different meaning.

Switzerland and Palestine
Leaving aside, therefore, the purely legal formalism, we shall consider only the political substance of the matter, limiting the problem to the simple question whether and how it is possible to transfer the Swiss system of Federal Cantons to Palestine.

In the first place it has to be remembered that the case of Switzerland is unique for its solution of the problem offered by the existence of several nationalities (ethnic groups) within one state. This solution was found long before the post-war remedies of minority protection had been devised. In both cases heterogeneous groups are found united within the boundaries of one state, but there is a difference in the relations between the various groups. To begin with, strictly speaking there are no minorities at all to be found in Switzerland, except in the statistics. Consequently there also is no dominant majority. Against this most of the European states who by international right are bound to recognise and protect their minorities and to extend to them freedom of cultural life, have created for these groups a special status without having had recourse to cantonization. In Switzerland, on the other hand, the "statistical minorities" of French (21 percent) and Italian (8 percent) speaking Swiss are not national minorities from the legal point of view, but enjoy the same rights as the 69 percent German Swiss.

Evolution of Cantonization

The question now is whether this solution, the product of five or six hundred years of Swiss history — including internecine wars, religious strife and social revolution — can be made the basis of the first Constitution of Palestine.

It must not be assumed that the present position in Switzerland existed from the beginning. Indeed, the Swiss Confederation was rather slow in working it out. Taking the 13th century to be the first in the annals of Swiss history, it is only in the 16th that Switzerland became a state composed of three nationalities, for only then had the French and Italian districts begun to cooperate with the Swiss of German stock. And only in 1874, when her present Constitution was proclaimed, did Switzerland in fact become what she is now, a multi-national, federal state with three categories of national

territory, German, French and Italian cantons, represented equally in the Upper House (Staenderat) and three official languages, in which the laws of the country are printed and proclaimed.

A Doubtful Solution

In the abstract, the permanent division of the people of Palestine into Arabs and Jews might lead to cantonization, which *inter alia* presupposes: 1. complete equality between the races 2. complete loyalty of all groups to their home country and their fusion into an organic whole, with a tendency to eliminate completely any "sympathy" with "their own people" across the boundaries. It is important to note that for the purpose of the scheme it is absolutely essential that the Palestine Arabs should be independent of the Arabs in the adjacent countries, just as the German Swiss are independent of and neutral towards the Germans in the Reich.

Secondly is ought to be asked, whether such a solution would indeed be a solution of the national problem, as distinct from the territorial one. Can Jews in an Arab canton, or Arabs in a Jewish canton, expect to find full protection of their individual and collective rights? Or will every canton develop into a microscopic state, with an oppressive majority and an oppressed minority? In that case we shall have two states instead of a federation of two cantons. On this point Mr. Duff is rather illuminating, for he writes that both cantons "...should be accorded complete independence and even admitted to membership of the League of Nations." This is in fact an abandonment of the idea of cantonization.

To return to Switzerland, there are also mixed cantons in existence (e.g. the Waadt) where French and Germans are living side by side on terms of complete equality. Even after the division of the country into national cantons, it was found impossible completely to segregate the two nationalities. In fact every nationality has its "irredenta" which is scattered over the whole territory of the country. The same would happen in Palestine on an even larger scale, if the continuous immigration is taken into account. The introduction of cantons in Palestine presupposes, therefore, a mutual recognition of the national status by and of both nationalities, and a wide measure of fair play in matters political and economic. Were geographical distribution is not enough.

Unprepared

Is there any reason to suppose this recognition possible? Is there any prospect for two groups which for many years have come to regard each other as strangers to unite on the basis of a mere constitutional reform into a system of cantons, without any previous experience in cooperation within the frame-work of self-governing institutions? I suggest that the idea of a sudden creation of a united and peaceful community by such means as outlined above rests on spurious foundations.

In any case the representatives of Arab public opinion have hitherto strenuously opposed the recognition of the Jews as a body or the granting to them of political rights. One need only consider the non-recognition of the Mandate by all the Arab parties.

There can be no cantonization without a guarantee of the free and unfettered development of the

two nationalities. It is a mistake to believe in the possibility that the two nations of Palestine can "fuse into one organic whole, imbued with an outlook that is not specifically Arab or specifically Jewish, but simply and wholly Palestinian" as "Great Britain and the East" expressed itself on February 13, 1936. There is no such simplicity in Palestine with her many national and cultural distinctions.

It should also be emphasised that the Palestine Mandate gives no encouragement to the idea of a federal equilibrium of Jews and Arabs. With regard to the Jews it offers them a Jewish National Home, represented by the Jewish Agency. No such provision exists for the Arabs, be it with regard to territory or nationality, and when offered them in 1922 it was rejected.

Lastly, the Swiss federal system was the final result of gradual historical development, whereas it is proposed to make it the starting point of evolution in Palestine, without any experience in cooperation between Jews and Arabs.

A country like Palestine, which for many reasons is undergoing profound changes in ethnical composition, economic life, and the social foundations of urban and rural life, cannot hurriedly create a system of federal canton constitution, which was brought about in Switzerland by a long process of development.

NEW POLISH CONSUL FOR TEL AVIV

TEL AVIV, Monday. — M. Tadeusz Piszczakowski, of the staff of the Foreign Office at Warsaw, has been appointed to act as Polish Consul in Tel Aviv in place of the late Consul, M. Stanislaw Lukasiewicz, who died here some months ago.

The new consul is expected to arrive in Tel Aviv and take up his duties in a few weeks' time. Until his arrival, the Polish Consul-General in Jerusalem, M. Kurnikowski, will continue to visit Tel Aviv twice weekly and deal with the affairs of the Consulate.

REVOLVER IN LAND DISPUTE

SAFAD, Monday. — One Arab was seriously wounded and another lightly wounded by revolver shots during a quarrel over land in the village of Nechen, in the Acre sub-district. The two wounded men are Muhammed Zaid and Jamil Muhammed Ali.

Police arrested two suspects and also found a German revolver, which had recently been used, and some ammunition. Investigations are being carried on.

Future of Kaukji In the East

Should any resident of Palestine be at all anxious as to the future welfare of Fawzi el Kaukji, whom the British press named "Palestine's Public Enemy No. 1" during the disturbances, the Jaffa daily "A'Difa'a" yesterday furnished some consolation.

Fawzi is stated to have been invited by the Syrian Government to organize the new National Army there, but will first benefit from the amnesty granted political offenders promised by the French authorities.

He was concerned in the 1925-26 Druze rising in Syria and has been an exile in Iraq ever since. "A'Difa'a" goes one better than Fawzi's new patrons, however, by stating that the "Great One's" homeland is the whole of the Arabian Peninsula.

An explanation that has the merit of being novel if not veracious, is given by "Al Jamia Al Islamia" for continued highway robbery and armed crimes in Palestine.

The paper declares that police persecution of villagers who took part in the recent disturbances compels these victims to roam the countryside for fear of returning home. The editor suggests that the Government might assure them that they would be unmolested if they went back to their villages.

Reuter dispatches from Jerusalem published in the British daily press give a colourful description of highwaymen's methods in Palestine, stating that poverty—not politics — is behind the recent crime wave.

RECEPTION FOR RABBI HERTZOG

Preparations are being made for the reception of Rabbi Hertzog, the Chief Rabbi of Palestine, who is expected to arrive in Haifa on Thursday.

Rabbi Berlin has been chosen as chairman of the reception committee which is composed of representatives of various national and religious bodies.

DUTCH ROYAL COUPLE

AMSTERDAM, Monday. — Princess Juliana and Prince Bernhard are in Poland for their honeymoon, it is revealed here.

The Royal couple left The Hague by motor-car on Friday and took train from Brussels for Poland. They are staying at the famous Patria Hotel in Kynica, which is owned by the well-known tenor, Jan Kiepura.

The Crown Princess and her consort intend to stay for three weeks, spending most of their time skiing.

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Palestine & Middle East Economic Magazine

(Published by "Mischar w'Taasia" Co., Ltd. Tel Aviv).

VOL. IX No. 1.

JANUARY 1937.

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