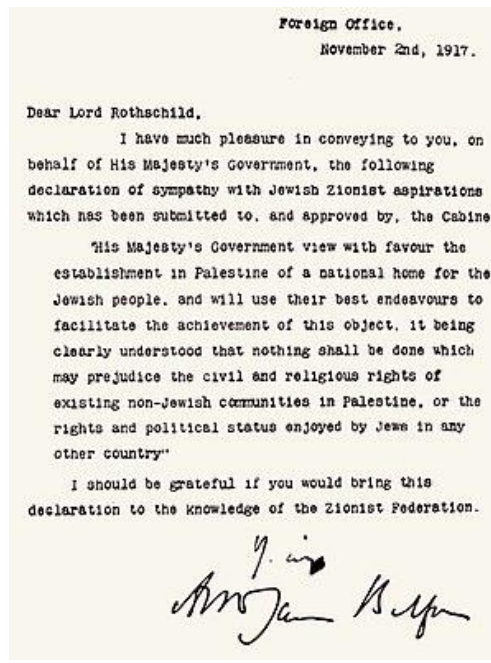


The Balfour Centenary and the Jewish Problem



"The Jews are our misfortune." Heinrich Von Treitschke - 1880

"Palestine is our land and the Jews are our dogs!" Arab rioter's chant 1920, Jerusalem

"Perhaps the Jews are the problem." William Rabinowitz - 2017

By Jerry Klinger



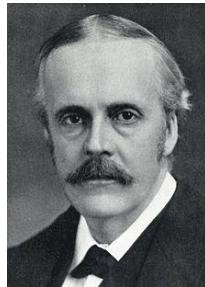
Royal Albert Hall

The Royal Albert Hall in London is a magnificent concert and arts venue. The foundation stone of the great hall, capable of seating over 5,700, was laid by Queen Victoria in 1867. The Royal Albert Hall was built upon the land and home of William Wilberforce. Wilberforce, an Evangelical Christian, successfully dedicated his life to ending British involvement and toleration of the Atlantic Slave trade, 1807.

November 7, 2017, the evening was rainy and cold. Over 3,000 Christians organized and celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration at the Royal Albert in the world's largest show of respect and honor for the Balfour Declaration. They were joined by a thin number of Jews, many not comfortable in the company of Israeli flag waving, faith-driven, Israel supporting, Evangelical Christians.

The Jewish Hatikvah, the Jewish Hope, 1,900 years coming, began with the Balfour Declaration. Jews worldwide, especially in the dark hovels of rabid, anti-Semitic Eastern Europe, were incredulously delirious that the long nightmare of their oppression might be drawing to a close.

The Balfour Declaration is a mere 129 words long. The Declaration is an imperfect statement, more of a position letter of intent, written by British Prime Minister Lloyd George's War Cabinet during the dark days of World War I. The British government declared its support of Zionist aspirations for the establishment of a Jewish national home for the Jewish people in Palestine.



Arthur Balfour



Walter Rothschild

Foreign Office

November 2nd, 1917

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet

His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national 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 and religious rights of

existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

Yours,

Arthur James Balfour

The wording was a series of flawed political compromises. One imperfection was the statement, *the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people*. It never defined the borders of Palestine as they had never been established. Did the wording suggest a National Home in all of Palestine or in a part of Palestine?

The Declaration was understood, by many, as the restoration, and the reestablishment, of a Jewish national home in the same land as Biblical Israel had lived on. Though the War Cabinet's decisions were guided by the exigencies of the War effort and the need for manpower, a strong religious flow underlay the Declaration.

Jewish return was a pre-condition of the Second Coming of Christ.

Restoration of the Jews was a factor in the Cabinet's mind along with the belief that millions of Jews would fight with the British for Palestine while defending Egypt and the Suez Canal for Britain. Pragmatically, the British understood Jews were not willing to send their sons to possibly die in the war if it meant helping the hated British ally, Russia. But for Palestine...that was a different matter.

The newly formed Jewish -Zion Mule Corp and the later Jewish Legion crossed the Sinai desert from Egypt to fight beneath the walls of Jerusalem for the liberation of all the peoples of Palestine from the oppressive Turk. It did not matter if they were Christian, Jew or Muslim. They were commanded by a Christian Zionist, Lt. Col. John Henry Patterson. Decades later, Patterson would become the Godfather of Yoni Netanyahu, the brother of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

For Lord Balfour, as he explained, the Declaration was a solution to the "Jewish problem." Jews had been discriminated, subjugated and oppressed for millennia. The establishment of a Jewish National Home for them in their ancient homeland would be justice for and restitution to them. It would unlock the incredible potential of a people he admired. He knew the freed Jew, in their own land, would bring great things to all humanity... if only they had the chance.

The French and the Americans supported the reestablishment of a Jewish State before the Balfour was issued. Even the Vatican had endorsed the idea of the Jewish return. Yet the British hesitated. The Balfour Declaration was only an empty statement. The British did not control Palestine.

October 31, 1917, the same day as the Cabinet concluded the formulation of the Declaration, Australian, and New Zealand forces, miraculously, won a major victory over the Turks in Palestine. The ANZACS had crushed the Turks at Beersheba. The path to the rest of Palestine was possible.

The road to Jerusalem was open.

The British feared not issuing the Balfour Declaration. They feared the Germans would do it first. Three days after the British victory in Beersheba, the Balfour Declaration was delivered to Lord Rothschild in London.

For some bigots, the Balfour Declaration was a different type of solution to the Jewish problem. It was a way to get rid of them.

Less than thirty years later, the Nazis came up with their own variant to the Jewish problem. They abandoned preliminary plans to exile the Jews who came under their grip. They could not send them to Palestine as Palestine was under British control. The British controlled the Mediterranean. The British, acquiescing to Arab demands, did not want more Jews in Palestine even if the Jews were fleeing for their lives from the gathering darkness of coming Holocaust. The Nazis developed their "Final Solution" to the Jewish problem instead... kill the Jews...and they did... 6,000,000 were murdered.

A second imperfection with the Balfour Declaration was that Palestine, though seriously underpopulated and impoverished, was not devoid of people. 1900 years earlier, the Romans fed up with repeated Jewish revolts, banished nearly all the Jews from the land they officially renamed Palestine.

Even after banishment, some Jews still remained behind. They formed a continuous, unbroken Jewish link to the Land through modern times and the rebirth of the State of Israel.

The Romans vanished. The later Byzantine Romans were defeated by the invading Arab Muslims. The Crusaders came and left. For almost five centuries, vaguely identified and defined Palestine, a backwater of neglect and decay, was a Turkish province. Its population was Muslim, heavily Christian with Jewish minorities.

The British had promised Palestine to the Jews while a different majority lived there.

Lord Balfour spoke at the Zionist- British joint celebration of the Declaration held at the Royal Albert Hall, July 1920.

"With the Arab question as it presents itself within the limits of Palestine. It will require tact, and require judgment; it will require above all sympathetic goodwill on the part both of Jew and Arab. So far as the Arabs are concerned a great and interesting and an attractive race I hope they will remember that while this assembly and all Jews that it represents through the world desire under the aegis of Great Britain to establish this home for the Jewish people, the Great Powers, and among all the Great Powers most especially Great Britain, has freed them, the Arab race, from the tyranny of their brutal conqueror (Ottomans-Turks) who had kept them under his heel for these many centuries.

I hope they will remember it is we who have established the independent Arab sovereignty of the Hejaz (Saudi Arabia) hope they will remember that it is we who desire in Mesopotamia (Iraq) to prepare the way for the future of a self-governing, autonomous Arab State, and I hope that, remembering all that, they will not grudge that small notch for it is no more geographically, whatever it may be historically- that small notch in what are now Arab territories being given to the people who for all these hundreds of years have been separated from it but surely have a title to develop on their own lines in the land of their forefathers, which ought to appeal to the sympathy of the Arab people as it, I am convinced appeals to the great mass of my own Christian fellow countrymen. That is the first difficulty. That can be got over and will be got over by mutual goodwill".

Arab rioting broke out in Palestine (1920), incited by demagogues, claiming the Jews were attacking the Al Aqsa, Mosque on the Temple Mount. The Arab street screamed, thousands of voices chanted...

"Nashrab dam al-Yahud- we will drink the blood of the Jews."

With loss of life on both sides, eventually the British put down the Arab rioting.

Still, the Balfour Declaration did not embody the force of law. In the Versailles Peace Treaty and in the later San Remo agreement the signatories ending World War I finally incorporated and codified the Balfour Declaration into international law.

Systems of Mandates were created, not just for Palestine, in the treaties. If the Palestine Mandate and the State of Israel it helped create is, as some demand, illegitimate, so are the modern Arab states of Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia that were created under the identical international agreed upon Mandate processes. To complicate matters, in 1922, the British under Winston Churchill, finally defined the Balfour to mean that the Jewish National Home would be in part of Palestine, not all of Palestine. The lands east of the Jordan River, representing 77% of the Mandate, were divided from the area of the potential Jewish national home and given to a foreign Arab leader of the Bedouin, Hashemite tribe. The Mandate of Trans-Jordan was created by the British, Judenrein, to be ruled even today by a non-Palestinian King.

Balfour responded over and over again to the haters of the Balfour Declaration and the idea of a national home for the Jewish people. The Balfour Declaration made a special point of protecting the rights of minority faiths and people in Palestine. The rights of Jews and Christians, distinct minorities destined to live under future Muslim Mandates were not safeguarded in the same way.

In 1922, Balfour spoke; his words then reflecting the motivations coming from the modern BDS movement.

"I am convinced that none but pedants or people who are prejudiced by religious or racial bigotry, none but those who are blinded by one of these causes would deny for one instant that the case of the Jews is absolutely exceptional and must be treated by exceptional methods."

The centenary celebration of the most important foundation document in modern Jewish history was ironical. The Balfour Declaration, created with hope, for not just Jews but all people in Mandate

Palestine, was an imperfect perfect of the time. All the Mandates were imperfect. Only the Jewish Mandate was then and is today, reserved for special scrutiny, ridicule, and protest.

November 7, 2017, the Christian community of faith gathered to openly, loudly and joyfully celebrate the Balfour Declaration.

Around the world, Jews barely mentioned or timidly remembered the Balfour. A few symposiums here and there, thinly attended, frequently at Chabad synagogue venues. The Miami Jewish Federation planned a symposium but quickly canceled it after a bomb threat. The American Zionist Movement is planning a "Gala" at the Israeli Embassy. Checking around the U.S., Jewish Federations, in Los Angeles, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Palm Beach, Florida, did not have anything or did very little to commemorate the Balfour. They preferred to keep it low or non-existent. As one Federation told me, they were scheduled up with other things and could not pay attention to the Balfour. Only the Christians could and did.

Jerry Klinger is president of the Jewish American Society for Historic Preservation,

www.JASHP.org.