

"The Jews Will Win Through"

R. H. S. Crossman on the Palestine Report

THE British and United States Governments are still considering the report on Palestine submitted by the Joint Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry. In the BBC's Radio Newsreel the other evening, one of the six British members of that Committee, R. H. S. Crossman, gave some of his personal opinions of the report in an interview (which we print below) with Elsa Knight Thompson.

"THE first thing I'd like to know (he was asked) is this: Did the Commission go into the field with a binding Government brief — limitations within which they had to work?"

"Of course I can only speak for the British members. Actually the question asked is one our American colleagues asked until they finally decided that the facts, though incredible, were true. And the facts are that the six English members were selected chiefly because they hadn't committed themselves on the subject of Palestine, and they were sent off on their travels without even an interview with the Foreign Secretary or going near a Cabinet Minister, and they had no contact with anybody in London until they returned and handed in their report. Those are the facts, and I have a feeling that the Government was quite willing to put the responsibility for Palestine on us for those four months. Nobody specially wanted to brief us because that would have meant making up their minds what brief to give us; which no one wanted to do at that time."

"And do you honestly feel that the ten recommendations with which the Committee emerged are valid and can be implemented?"

"I am quite certain that the short-term recommendations could be implemented at once, and that they're valid both in the sense that they are just to both sides and that they reduce to a minimum the danger of bloodshed in Palestine."

Long-term Problem

"And what about the long-term verdict—the setting up of the Jewish-Arab state?"

"You've got every right to be more dubious about that. The idea that Jews and Arabs of Palestine, both communities perfectly fit to rule themselves, should stay under a mandate or a trusteeship for an indefinite period—well, the idea depresses me. And I know that it won't work except on one condition: that the power which exercises the trusteeship or the mandate has the full backing in future of the other United Nations, and works strictly to a United Nations policy laid down by the Trusteeship Council. The present situation, in which Great Britain tried to carry out a policy in the teeth of opposition from the Arab states and the Moslem world and the Jewish world, from public opinion in the U.S.A. and so on and so on—well, it hasn't worked in the past and it won't work in the future."

"Is it your interpretation that the Balfour Declaration, morally and legally, signified the intention of the British people to set up a Jewish state?"

The Balfour Compromise

"Oh no, quite definitely no. The Balfour Declaration, like all declarations, was a compromise—a formula designed in this case to bridge the gap between Mr. Balfour, Mr. Lloyd George, and the other members of the 1917 Cabinet, who definitely looked forward to a Jewish state, and on the other hand, the group in the Cabinet headed by the leading British Jew, Mr. Montague, who was against international Zionism, and opposed the whole notion of the Jewish state. As a result the Balfour Declaration carefully left it open and uncertain whether there would ever be a Jewish state in Palestine. And that's half the trouble. Mind you, if I had sat in that Cabinet knowing what I now know, I think I'd have been against it. But that's neither here nor there now. Now it's not a matter of wise or unwise decisions in the past, because the National Home is there—a real live fact. Already 500,000 Jews believing Britain's pledged word have packed their bags and gone to Palestine, and they've planned and they've achieved more than any other colonists in the history of the world. So what's the good of asking what one would have done in 1917? In 1946 nothing which anybody says or anybody does is going to liquidate the National Home. It's there, and it's going to stay, and it's going to grow, whatever policy is laid down by whatever Government. Its growth may be delayed, but in the end the Jews will win through to self-government because they believe in what they're doing, and because the people who are trying to stop them don't. At least that's how I feel."

"You had some pretty sharp things to say in the report about the Jewish attitude to the Arabs."

"Yes, but not nearly so sharp as the things we said and implied about the British Government's attitude to the Arab. One Arab girl in eight can go to school—after 25 years of British administration of Palestine. That's quite a fact."

"Yes, the tremendous gap between economic and cultural level of the Jewish community and the Arab community must be a basic factor. How much would its solution contribute to the solving of the problem?"

Social Discrepancies

"Well, the basic factor of it all of course is national, but social discrepancy as gross as it is in Palestine does embitter and intensify the national struggle. Just let me give you one instance. There are some 2,300 engineers in Palestine with proper qualifications. Of these I believe 2,200 are Jews. Now how can two peoples even try to get together when they have no point of contact—when there's no Arab of middle

class to correspond with the Jewish middle-class; when the Arab worker is illiterate, and the Jewish worker literate; when the Arab worker is just beginning to have Trade Unions, and when the Jew has achieved a closed shop; worst of all, when the Jewish worker on an average receives twice as much from the Jewish employer for the same work as the Arab worker receives from the Arab employer? Economic and social discrepancies in fact make it impossible for the individual Arab and Jew to have common interests, or to begin to look for a common solution to a common problem."

"And what is the attitude of the British official towards the two communities, Jew and Arab?"

"It's dangerous to generalise. The best thing I can do is to quote to you the view of an officer who spent many, many years trying to indoctrinate policemen and make them impartial. I asked him the same question you asked me. And he told me that you have to face the fact that despite every effort, roughly 75 per cent. of the British in Palestine feel biased in favour of the Arabs. Now that doesn't necessarily mean that they are biased, because in fact they are taught to counteract that prejudice, but it does mean that both in the police and the civil service there is an undeniable natural anti-Jewish bias in Palestine to-day. And no honest official would deny it."

"What is this prejudice, in your opinion, based on?"

"Well, my police friend told me that in his view it wasn't just anti-Semitism, as I had supposed. His theory is that the Englishman likes the rich Arab because he's both cultured and charming, and he likes the poor Arab because he can feel superior to him. An Englishman dislikes the Jew in Palestine because the Jew is, more often than not, far abler than the Englishman, and doesn't hesitate to say so. I must say I was astounded by the Palestinian Jews. They are not a people which asks for sympathy or patronage, or which suffers fools gladly. They are the toughest community I have ever met in my life."

The Hagannah

"So there is something in the argument that the 10,000 from Europe, if they're allowed in without disarmament taking place, might strengthen the Jewish Hagannah?"

"Oh yes. To be perfectly honest, any Jew capable of bearing a weapon who arrives in Palestine to-day strengthens Hagannah whether he's a 12-year-old boy or a 60-year-old grandfather. Because the Hagannah is like the Swiss army. It simply is the Jewish people in its part-time capacity as conscripts in the Hagannah. If you want to get an idea of what it's like, think of the Jews in Palestine as a resistance movement—far better organised than the French Maquis, or Tito's Partisans, certainly far more heavily armed, certainly with far more money, and, above all, with no quislings."

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