To the Cherished Memory of

Yael Goodman Penkower (1945–2016)

"Most blessed of women be Yael" (*Judges* 5:24)

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Preface

"A large problem in a small place." Palestine, Martin Charteris later recalled of his service there as head of Military Intelligence in 1945-1946 for the local British authorities, had long been a worrisome conundrum for His Majesty's Government.[1] Ever since the 1917 Balfour Declaration pledging David Lloyd George's World War I cabinet to facilitate "the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people," to be followed by receipt of the Palestine Mandate from the League of Nations in 1922, different ministers wrestled with Jewish and Arab competing claims to the biblical Promised Land. The struggle between these two communities for political sovereignty, emerging with force in the nineteen thirties then put on hold during World War II, surfaced again after the Allied victory in Europe of May 1945. Traumatized by the Holocaust, the hitherto unimaginable, ultimate confirmation of Jewry's historical status as the consummate victim, Jews worldwide nailed their colors to the Zionist mast in demanding independence for Eretz Israel and thus end the curse of exile. With a thread that spooled back 3,000 years to an unbroken connection with the land which had seen their birth as a people, they noted that the Jewish foothold had never been broken when Palestine passed under many conquerors: Babylonians, Romans, Arabs, Seljuks, Crusaders, Mamelukes, Ottoman Turks, and Great Britain. The neighboring Arab states, for their part, rallied with implacable steadfastness to have what they called *Falastin* granted freedom. The country's Arabs, they observed, outnumbered the Jews by more than 2:1. The remnant who survived European Jewry's destruction, facing the anguish of irreparable loss, should be settled elsewhere, their welfare the responsibility of other powers. Democracy, whose cause had triumphed against Adolf Hitler and his comrades-in-arms, demanded that the principle of national self-determination be honored and implemented for the Arab majority without further delay.

Caught in the vortex of these conflicting appeals at a time when the Empire's finances had been impoverished by the global war, the Labour Party chieftains who took over the reins of government in July 1945 sought to temporize. The unexpected, singular response of the new occupant of the White House, Harry S. Truman, to the grim plight of the officially designated Jewish "Displaced Persons" led London and Washington to join hands in an Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine. The *yishuv* (Jewish community of Eretz Israel), viewing this step as a further delay in realizing its dream of statehood, and furious that co-religionists fleeing the graveyard of Europe were denied immediate entry into the one haven of hope prepared to receive them, launched a united resistance against the mandatory. Its continued determination, along with constant attacks by underground insurgents and a firm *aliya bet* immigration movement for Holocaust survivors that won widespread sympathy in light of the appalling revelations of the death camps, escalated into what Winston Churchill would call in the House of Commons on March 12, 1947, the "senseless, squalid war" of 100,000 British troops (including 20,000 policemen) stationed in Palestine against the native Jewish population.[2] Eminent voices on both sides of the aisle joined the leader of the Conservative opposition in calling for HMG's prompt withdrawal.

When both the Arabs and the Jews rejected provisional autonomy schemes advanced by Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, the cabinet decided on February 14, 1947, to turn to the United Nations for advice. This internationalization of the Palestine imbroglio, coinciding with the British exit from India and elsewhere, would prove decisive in the long run. Still, with strong backing from Prime Minister Clement Attlee, Bevin persisted in his preference for a binational state that would not jeopardize British military bases and oil interests in the Middle East. The Chiefs of Staff, like their American counterparts, championed this course, all the while concerned about possible Soviet incursion into the Mediterranean and Persian Gulf. In February 1948 they suggested the incorporation of the southern and eastern parts of Palestine into Jordan and the northern part into Syria/Lebanon, effectively leaving a Jewish enclave around Tel Aviv. The U.S. State Department accepted Whitehall's assessment, but one man's decision against what he contemptuously labeled the "striped-pants boys" in Foggy Bottom, coupled with his deep resentment against Bevin's casting aspersions about this Chief Executive catering to the Jewish vote, weighed heaviest in the

balance. Truman, joining his humanitarian impulses to electoral needs, bi-partisan Congressional support, a desire to forestall the Soviets in recognizing a new state that had already proven itself on the battlefield, and a wish to strengthen the UN's future, was ultimately persuaded by an intimate circle of friends and advisors to lend his crucial support for the Jewish dream of national revival.

In 1949, Simha Asaf, then rector of the Hebrew University and a member of Israel's first Supreme Court, had to choose an awardee for the prize given by one American Jew to the individual having rendered the greatest service to Israel during the previous two years. Not surprisingly, David Ben-Gurion, who had spearheaded the crusade for statehood as chairman of the Jewish Agency for Palestine executive, received the honor. The other serious candidate, Asaf indicated on that occasion with a touch of sarcasm, was Ernest Bevin. This Britisher's obstinacy and arrogance, best reflected in his order to send the *Exodus 1947*'s 4,554 refugee passengers back to Germany, dominated HMG's policy. The Foreign Secretary believed that the Jewish state would eventually become Communist, and on another occasion used the phrase "international Jewry" with its connotation of conspiracy. While focusing on forging a strong postwar alliance with Washington, he confessed to Ambassador Halifax in October 1945 that he viewed the United States as "the untried devil." In early 1949, Bevin summed up his exasperation as well as what Wm. Roger Louis terms the final "British perspective" on the Palestine problem with a tempestuous response. The American attitude appeared to be not only "let there be an Israel and to hell with the consequences," he wrote on a draft to Ambassador Oliver Franks in Washington, but also "peace at any price, and Jewish expansion whatever the consequences." Every Israeli city and settlement should erect a statue to Bevin, Abba Eban mused years later.[3]

The creation of *Medinat Yisrael* on May 14, 1948, celebrating Jewry's heritage and restoration, was based on the fundamental premise that lay behind the Zionist revolution—lack of an independent state had accounted for endless persecution, dehumanization, and martyrdom at the hand of host countries. Imminent doom had been a feature of Jewish life ever since the Assyrian conquest of the Israelite Northern Kingdom in the year 722 BCE. The wandering Jew, cast out for millennia from Eretz Israel and subsequent, temporary places of refuge, validated Isaac Deutscher's epithet "Trees have roots, Jews have legs." "The Jews have taught me how to wait," wrote an admiring Henrik Ibsen

in the play *Peer Gynt* (1867). Keepers of the faith, praying "Next year in Jerusalem!," waited for the Messiah to return them home. Writing to his friend Max Brod, Franz Kafka described Jews "with their hind legs fastened to the Jewish traditions of their fathers and with their forelegs getting no ground under their feet. The despair thus ensuing translates into inspiration." In February 1942, Stefan Zweig, with fond memories of Vienna's glamour and grace depicted in his subsequently published *The World of Yesterday*, thanked Brazil for giving him and his wife Elizabet shelter from the Nazi obsession to kill every Jew. He added that with his spiritual home, Europe, "having destroyed itself," "unusual powers are needed in order to make another wholly new beginning. Those that I possess have been exhausted by long years of homeless wandering." He and his wife, holding hands, then took their own lives.[4]

"Homelessness and hopelessness, that is the lot of our brethren!" observed U.S. Army Chaplain Abraham J. Klausner in Munich to a fellow rabbi in the United States while trying to meet the basic needs of 34,000 of the 45,000 survivors living in the American occupied zone of Germany in February 1946. Rejecting any further delay, the heralds of Zionism sought to bring an end to their people's homelessness, the "pariah condition" which Nahum Goldmann told United Nations Special Committee on Palestine chairman Emil Sandström could no longer obtain after the Holocaust.[5] The belief in education and assimilation, which sustained so many European Jews and to which Bevin and colleagues sedulously adhered, had foundered catastrophically on the shoals of the *Shoah*. Before it was too late, Zionist champions insisted, Auschwitz obliged Jews to summon a future of national identity and purpose into being. Theodor Herzl, the founder of political Zionism, had concluded his manifesto *Der Judenstaat* (The State of the Jews) in February 1896 with a conviction: "If you will it, it is no dream." The time had come to transform this assertion into reality, ground a distinct people to roots in their ancestral soil, give them sanctuary, and lighten the darkness.

To achieve this objective, the new beginning of which Zweig had despaired, appeared nothing short of fantasy after the Holocaust. The Zionists' task would be Herculean. Arab intractable animosity, both in Palestine and beyond its borders, became quickly manifest. Consistent British opposition turned into a dialogue of the deaf. The stance of the Kremlin, long averse to Jewish nationalism and, consequently, that of

its satellite countries offered scant promise even as the Cold War escalated between Moscow and the West. Once Attlee's government decided to lay the Palestine dilemma at the feet of the UN, the chances of securing the requisite two-thirds majority vote at the General Assembly for Palestine's partition into two states—which the Jews, but not the Arabs, were prepared to accept as a compromise—seemed highly remote. U.S. State and Defense Department officialdom remained hostile, also doubting the survival of the Jewish state. Truman's position shifted over time, and in early 1948, furious at the unrelenting pressure leveled by Abba Hillel Silver and the American Zionist Emergency Council, the President wished to wash his hands of the entire matter.

Ben-Gurion, conceiving a state, as he told Harold Laski in February 1946, as "an essential condition for fulfilling *teudat hayeinu*—to live according to the ideal which we presented to ourselves," understood early on that any prospect of success depended upon three factors. These included the *yishuv*'s resolve; the willingness of the survivors, Europe's forsaken, to brave considerable obstacles in making their way to the Holy Land; and the readiness of American Jewry, the one large community spared Hitler's murderous zeal at systematic slaughter, to unite in contributing significantly—at times illegally—to its realization. He realized that the UN resolution of November 29, 1947, to partition Palestine into two states would lead to war, but still he told the Mapai Central Committee a few days later that he knew of "no greater achievement" by world Jewry "in its long history since it became a people." With uncharted waters looming, recurrent difficulty and considerable strife were certain. "Breakers ahead" was Moshe Sharett's turn of phrase when cabling Silver on May 13, 1948, that "Israel" would be the state's new name.[6]

A story told at the time, when the *yishuv* had its back to the wall, related the words of a seventeen-year-old *Palmah* soldier who said this to his seventy-year-old grandfather: "*Sabba*, I may not live to see the Jewish state, but I'm sure that you will." Amitai Etzioni recalled that his Palmah unit in Jerusalem faced Jordanian tanks with no antitank weapons, armed only with Czechoslovak rifles for which they had no armor-piercing bullets. Many of his fellow soldiers were Holocaust survivors, so new off the boat that they did not understand most commands in Hebrew and were still wearing the drab clothing they arrived in. On March 27, 1948, 47 fighters of the Hagana's Carmeli Brigade, part of a

90-man convoy sent from Nahariya to besieged Kibbutz Yehiam, were killed, many of the bodies mutilated, in an ambush by 250 Arabs near al-Kabri seven miles north of Acre. A British flying column failed to reach the trapped Jews, and the Arabs only withdrew when British artillery opened fire with 12-lb and 25-lb high-explosive shells. On April 9, an Irgun-LEHI assault on Deir Yassin resulted in close to 110 Arab dead. Four days later, in retaliation for Deir Yassin and the death in battle at al-Qastal of commander Abd al-Qadir al-Husseini, an Arab attack on a convoy to Hadassah Hospital left 78 dead, including 20 women. On May 12, two Arab Legion companies and hundreds of Arabs from nearby villages killed 24 Kfar Etzion badly outgunned defenders, murdering the next day 106 men and 27 women, including some after they had surrendered. Four defenders remained alive. They were among the 260 pioneers of isolated Gush Etzion, including those of Ein Tzurim, Masuot Yitzhak and Revadim, who were taken into captivity in Jordan, where they would stay for nine to eleven months; women were released earlier. Triumph at this point by either side was hardly a given.[7]

A sense that they had no choice (*ein breira*) filled Ben-Gurion and others with a desperate energy, driving them forward. As early as September 1947, Eban presciently observed to US Ambassador in London Lewis W. Douglas an additional reason: the urgent need had arisen now "to entrench ourselves" in order to withstand the pressure of a growing "Pan-Islamism," which had made "Pan-Arabism" out of date. Asked by King Abdullah of Jordan, in the course of their secret meeting in his Amman palace on May 10,1948, to "wait a few years" and not be "in such a hurry to proclaim an independent state," Golda Meir responded that a people who had waited 2,000 years should not be described as being "in a hurry." Four days later, one week after issue of the first Jewish postage stamps, labeled "*doar Ivri*" (Hebrew mail) because the state's new name had not yet been selected and displaying coins of the Great Revolt and that of Bar-Kokhba later against Roman rule with their inscription "Jerusalem the Holy," Ben-Gurion could turn with justification to Jon Kimche upon reading Israel's Declaration of Independence and announcing the new state's first government decree abolishing the mandatory's pro-Arab 1939 White Paper, and make a brief observation. "You see, we did it," he said. While crowds were out celebrating in the streets, the new Israeli police made their first arrest, placing a book thief in custody.[8]

Quite a number of studies have explored various aspects of this drama, and I have profited greatly from them. At the same time, a thorough analysis of the issue in all its complexity has been lacking to date. This would include developments in Palestine and in the Arab states, including how Palestine became a pawn in inter-Arab feuds; British and American responses both official and public; the role of the survivors; the context of the Cold War; and the saga as it unfolded—long overlooked by historians—in the corridors of the United Nations. Thinking that the Holocaust and the rise of the State of Israel are the seminal events of modern Jewish history, if not of the entire Jewish experience since the end of the Second Jewish Commonwealth, I have devoted my own scholarly energies over the years to these two themes. Ultimately, I chose to focus upon the period spanning from Hitler's rise to power in Germany until Israel's rebirth as a sovereign entity, the pivotal stage when the conflict between the two contending parties for Palestine's future destiny found its climactic resolution. *Palestine in Turmoil: The Struggle for Sovereignty, 1933-1939* and *Decision on Palestine Deferred: America, Britain, and Wartime Diplomacy, 1939-1945* served as the first two parts of this examination.[9] After almost five decades of research and writing, in addition to authoring other related publications, my projected trilogy now draws to a close with *Palestine to Israel: Mandate to State, 1945-1948*.

The loom on which the narrative was woven is large. With my quest resting on primary documentation, a very long stretch had to pass before I felt assured that the subject was given its proper due. Numerous archivists around the globe have been extremely helpful, but I wish to single out the staff of the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem, who provided much enthusiastic service over the years, and David Clark of the Harry S. Truman Library for ready assistance in the final stages of this endeavor. Books and articles by specialists on specific issues connected to the inquiry, as well as oral histories, furnished valuable information. Many of my interviews with leading participants, some of whom graciously opened their private files to inspection, added a good deal to the final result. The aid of research assistants and secretaries was not called upon, but a number of fellowships and grants, acknowledged in the first two segments of this trilogy, eased the burdens of travel and accommodation. Professor William E. Leuchtenburg, my mentor in the History department of Columbia University's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, taught me much about seeking to join wide-ranging

research and an objective approach to a limpid prose. Michael Popkin, a former academic colleague who chaired the Touro College Humanities Department, read the entire manuscript, as he did its predecessors, for clarity of style. He is a highly valued friend.

Most significantly, a caring family's encouragement eased the daunting task. My late parents, Rabbi Murry S. Penkower and Lillian Stavisky Penkower, provided an initial love of scholarship and of Zionism. My sisters Andrea and Sharon, my brother Jordan, and my brothers-in-law David and Joseph regularly offered support in different ways. So did my children, Avi, Talya, Yonina, Ayelet, and Ariel, and spouses Rochelle, David, Mark, and Shifi. The many grandchildren of whom this *sabba* is very proud, and who, along with their parents, all live in Israel, are a constant source of joy. My dear wife, Phyllis Mayer, is a wonderful new companion who shares fully in all that I undertake.

These concluding two volumes are dedicated to the cherished memory of Yael, with whom I relished a blissful marriage of almost forty-seven years. Like the very existence of Israel, her birthplace, this *bat Yerushalayim* and extraordinary woman was testimony to the human capacity to dream and to imagine. She accompanied me with our firstborn, Avi, in the summer of 1972 to the Jewish state resurgent, where I took my initial steps on what would be a long journey of discovery about my two chosen fields of study. When I had to leave for London one month later to begin work in the newly opened, voluminous World War II files at the Public Record Office, she and my brother interviewed Ben-Gurion on my behalf. *The Jews Were Expendable*, providing a decade later the first overview of how the free world responded during the Holocaust, was most aptly dedicated to her.[10] My *aliya* to Israel and Yael's returning home on July 1, 2002, fulfilled our long-held hope, and gave us the very best years of our lives together. Throughout, she always extended devotion and understanding, and her passing leaves a great void in the lives of everyone privileged to have been graced by her presence. In harmony with Chapter 126 of *Psalms*, we embraced the hope that Zion's fortunes would be restored, and we reveled in that story of remarkable achievement.

Alas, no resolution to the long-standing Arab-Jewish conflict is in prospect. Already in January 1946, Gershom Scholem had taken Hannah Arendt to task for championing what he termed "a patently anti-Zionist, warmed-over version of Communist criticism, infused

with a vague *galut* nationalism." Her public call for universalism against "reactionary" Zionism and "something that is for the Jewish people of life or death importance," observed the pioneering scholar of Jewish mysticism, neglected what he termed the "eternity" of antisemitism, as well as the fact that the Arabs, rejecting any solution that included Jewish immigration, were "primarily interested not in the morality of our political convictions but in whether or not we are here in Palestine at all." On the last day of 1947, the American philosopher and popularizer of "cultural pluralism" Horace Kallen, feeling that his fellow Jews stood "absolutely alone and that no power cares what happens to us except to use us as a tool or a scapegoat," concluded that "the wisest thing we can do is to stand up bravely and firmly like Job."[11] Confronted years later by the ongoing bleak stalemate with the Arab world and Balfour's vision of coexistence yet to be fulfilled, Israel's Jewish citizens continue to long for an honest dialogue with their neighbors that just might result in peace. At the same time, they choose to determine the nature of their public space. Their air streams with possibility. As the Third Jewish Commonwealth celebrates its seventieth birthday, it can be said that the psalmist's declaration has come true in our time: "They who sow in tears shall reap with songs of joy."

Jerusalem
May 14, 2018

Endnotes

1 Hadara Lazar, *Out of Palestine, The Making of Modern Israel* (New York, 2011), 112.

2 *Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons*, 484, col. 1346.

3 Norman and Helen Bentwich, *Mandate Memories, 1918–1948* (London, 1965), 177; Bevin to Halifax, October 12, 1945, FO371/45381, Public Record Office, Kew, England; Wm. Roger Louis, "British Imperialism," in Wm. Roger Louis and Robert W. Stookey, eds., *The End of the Palestine Mandate* (Austin, TX, 1986), 23, 27; Eban interview with the author, December 4, 1974.

4 Anne-Marie O'Connor, *The Lady in Gold* (New York, 2012), 175–176.

5 Klausner to Silverman, February 7, 1946, P68/3, Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem; Goldmann to Sandström, August 21, 1947, 93.03/2270/12, Israel State Archives (hereafter ISA), Jerusalem.

6 Ben-Gurion talk with Laski, February 13, 1946, David Ben-Gurion Archives, Sdeh Boker, Israel; Yehoshua Freundlich, *MeiHurban L'Tekuma* (Tel Aviv, 1994), 199; Shertok to Silver, May 13, 1948, 88/15–Het Tsadi; May 12, 1948, ISA. For Laski's changing views as a result of the Holocaust, see Michael Newman, *Harold Laski, A Political Biography* (London, 1993), chap. 12.

7 Meltzer to Montor, June 1, 1967, A371/40, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem; Etzioni letter to the Book Review editor, *New York Times*, December 12, 1999; *The Scotsman*, March 29, 1948; Kibbutz Yehiam memorial; Eliezer Tauber, *Deir Yassin: Sof HaMitos* (Jerusalem, 2017); Yehuda Slutzky, *Sefer Toldot HaHagana*, vol. 3, part 2 (Tel Aviv, 1973), 1397–1398; Benny Morris, *1948* (New Haven, CT, 2008), 169–171; Dov Knohl, ed., *Gush Etzion B'Milhamto* (Jerusalem, 1954). A special monument is located at the end of the trail that connects Israel's Yad Vashem, the official memorial to Jewish victims of the Holocaust, and Mount Herzl, the national cemetery for Israeli leaders and fallen soldiers. Known as the "Memorial for the Last of Kin," it commemorates the Holocaust survivors who fought and fell during Israel's War of Independence.

8 Douglas to Marshall, September 18, 1947, 867N.01/9-1857, State Department files, National Archives, Suitland, Md.; *Minhelet Ha'Am, Ginzakh HaMedina* (Jerusalem, 1978), 37–119, ISA; Itamar Atsmon, "Simanim Shel Tekuma," *Segula* 36 (May 2013): 64–67; Jon Kimche, *Seven Fallen Pillars, The Middle East, 1915–1950* (London, 1950), 228; Elon Gilad, "Israel—Day One: The Story of the Day of Independence," *HaAretz*, May 5, 2014.

9 Monty Noam Penkower, *The Holocaust and Israel Reborn: From Catastrophe to Sovereignty* (Urbana, IL, 1994); Monty Noam Penkower, *Palestine in Turmoil: The Struggle for Sovereignty, 1933–1939* (Boston, MA, 2014); Monty Noam Penkower, *Decision on Palestine Deferred: America, Britain, and Wartime Diplomacy, 1939–1945* (London, 2002). My first published study, which argued that the lack of a state made Jews vulnerable to persecution throughout their history, culminating in the Holocaust, appeared in Monty Noam Penkower, "The 1943 Joint Anglo-American Statement on Palestine," in M. Urofsky, ed., *Essays in American Zionism*, *Herzl Year Book* 8 (New York, 1978), 212–241. For the impact in the 1930s of Jewish powerlessness, see Monty Noam Penkower, *The Swastika's Darkening Shadow, Voices before the Holocaust* (New York, 2013).

10 Monty Noam Penkower, *The Jews Were Expendable: Free World Diplomacy and the Holocaust* (Urbana, IL, 1983).

11 Scholem to Arendt, January 28, 1946, in A. D. Skinner, ed. and trans., *Gershom Scholem, A Life in Letters, 1914–1982* (Cambridge, 2002), 330–332; Kallen to Billikopf, December 31, 1947, 13/13, Jacob Billikopf MSS, American Jewish

Archives, Cincinnati. Arendt was not persuaded, charging two years later that the Jewish homeland could still be saved if the U.S. trusteeship plan were adopted at the UN and a limited immigration of Jews in numbers and in time be approved, looking towards Judah Magnes's advocacy of binationalism. Otherwise, she declared, even if the Jews were to emerge victorious in an all-out war with the Arabs, they would be absorbed with physical self-defense, surrounded by "an entirely hostile Arab population," "to a degree that would submerge all other interests and activities." Hannah Arendt, "To Save the Jewish Homeland: There is Still Time," *Commentary* 5 (May 1948): 398–406. Her long-time friend, the German philosopher Karl Jaspers, entertained similar views, expressing to her in July 1947 his worry that the Jewish people "could lose their soul" in Palestine: "Perhaps the solution is to desire Palestine but *not* go there, because the task is to live among *all* the peoples of the world, with them and against them as long as they are content to remain peoples and nothing more. This would be a new form of that influence 'from afar' which has perhaps always been characteristic of biblical religion. And from that comes the tension and the excitement and the truly infinite nature of the task." Jaspers to Arendt, July 20, 1947, in L. Köhler and H. Saner, ed., *Hannah Arendt—Karl Jaspers Correspondence 1926–1969* (New York, 1992), 94–95. For her response two months later, in essential agreement, see 98–99.

1. The 100,000

The stench of death hung heavy in the air that spring of 1945. It clung to the nostrils of Allied liberators of the concentration camps on German soil as World War II in Europe drew to a close. Often stumbling across these centers of carnage in their race to Berlin, American and British soldiers reacted with shock, horror, revulsion. Nothing had prepared them for still-smoldering crematoria, thousands of unburied corpses—many stacked like cordwood, mass pits filled with skeletal remains, or sixty-pound, hollow-eyed prisoners ridden with typhus, tuberculosis, dysentery, and starvation. Of Bergen-Belsen's 40,000 inmates yet alive when a combined British-Canadian armored unit entered, 13,000 would die before that camp was burned to the ground six weeks later. After viewing Ohrdruf, an auxiliary camp at Buchenwald, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) commander Dwight D. Eisenhower cabled Washington and London to send officials and prominent editors to serve as eyewitness to the "unspeakable conditions," "where the evidence of bestiality and cruelty is so overpowering as to leave no doubt in their minds about the normal practices of the Germans in these camps." Stomach-turning photographs that followed, filling newspapers and magazines across the globe, at last provided unequivocal, timeless testimony to the core of Nazi barbarism—its reduction of human beings to ash and anonymity.[1]

In this "dire sink of iniquity," the phrase of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, Europe's Jews particularly remained faceless in the eyes of the outside world. Military statistics of the period categorized them as "Others," "Unclassified," or "Victims of Nazi persecution by race, religion, or political affiliation." Most often, just as the Allies had officially designated Jews nonpersons while Adolf Hitler's Third Reich and collaborator nations made Europe the cemetery of the Jewish people,

they received notice along with other "Displaced Persons" (DPs) according to their countries of birth. Although Jews composed more than half of Belsen's inmates before repatriation to former homes began, the sign set up in English and German at the entrance gate after the camp was liquidated acknowledged the dead there as "all of them victims of the German New Order in Europe and an example of Nazi Kultur." The U.S. Congressional delegation's report, once its twelve U.S. President once its twelve members had visited Buchenwald, Nordhausen, and Dachau, concluded that "a colossal scheme of extermination was planned and put into effect against all those in occupied countries who refused to accept the principles of nazi-ism [*sic*] or who opposed the saddling of the Nazi yoke on their countries." Very few news accounts on the camps' liberation even mentioned Jews, let alone connected them to the Holocaust; no story of a Jewish survivor appeared in the *New York Times*, the *New York Herald Tribune*, or the *Washington Post* throughout 1945.[2] It seemed that the one people targeted for systematic slaughter in the Second World War would continue to be denied the sense of communal distinction that had accounted for its mysterious survival these past 4,000 years.

For Zionists, the bi-millennial lack of national sovereignty had doomed a powerless people to its most tragic hour, the calculated, premeditated murder of 6,000,000 Jews, while the free world stood by. Weeks before the unexpected death of U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR) on April 12, American Zionist leader Abba Hillel Silver urged his followers not to rely exclusively on FDR and Churchill, but to sway public opinion in the democracies to the need for "the Jewish state now!" Moshe Shertok (later Sharett), head of the Jewish Agency for Palestine's political department, made the same point in personally pressing Pope Pius XII to sanction the return to their people of all Jewish children hidden in Catholic monasteries during the war, hopefully to Eretz Israel and the possibility of "full Jewish lives." On April 26, a coalition of Jewish survivors, partisans, and ghetto fighters resolved to struggle for statehood in an undivided Palestine, unrestricted immigration, and an end to their people's long history of exile (*galut*) and exclusion. [3]

Understandably, while the victorious Allied coalition celebrated Germany's unconditional surrender on May 8, Jewish Agency Executive chairman David Ben-Gurion penned in his diary that day "sad, very sad." This laconic reaction, he wrote to his wife Paula, had occurred to

him once before—at the time of the first Russian Revolution in 1905. Home lay only in Eretz Israel, he had suddenly realized then, a conviction the Mapai Party laborite tribune expounded upon now in a lengthy public statement:

> It is a great victory, but it is not yet our victory. Europe is liberated; but it is not yet the liberation of the Jewish remnant. And it is not only the fate of the few European survivors which is at stake; it is the fate of the whole Jewish race. For is there any assurance that this catastrophe will not be repeated?

In addition, Ben-Gurion went on, world Jewry could not rejoice because the British White Paper of May 1939 closed the gates to its eternal homeland. (That legislation also had provided for a single Palestine state of Arabs—then the clear majority—and Jews within ten years in treaty relations with Great Britain, and, as of 1940, prohibited Jewish land purchase in 64 percent of Palestine, setting restrictions within another 31 percent.) This condemned Jews to remain a minority in the National Home promised in Great Britain's 1917 Balfour Declaration and the subsequent Palestine Mandate entrusted to His Majesty's Government (HMG) in London by the League of Nations in 1922:

> Tens of thousands of Jewish lives were sacrificed when the only escape from Nazi extermination was denied them. Racial discrimination—the denial of elementary equality before the law—was introduced into the laws governing the settlement of land. And, worst of all, the Jewish people, as a people, has been denied its right to its own Home, and a solemn promise and international obligation turned into a scrap of paper.

"Historic justice and international good faith alike" called for the immediate establishment of Palestine as a Jewish commonwealth. This, Ben-Gurion concluded, "is the only solution of that great tragedy—the Jewish Problem."[4]

Jews and Arabs marked V-E (Victory over Europe) Day in very different fashion. While Zionist blue and white banners flew alongside

the Union Jack in Palestine's major cities, the general jubilation was overshadowed by disappointment at the failure to secure free immigration to the biblically covenanted Promised Land. Emphasis was placed on the unique suffering of European Jewry, the significant contribution of the *yishuv* (Palestinian Jewish community) to the war effort, and repudiating the possibility of rehabilitating Jewish communities on the Continent. The killing of three-quarters of Europe's Jews, declared the manifesto of the Jewish Agency, made it necessary that the Jewish people be enabled "to take its rightful place in Palestine in the concert of the free nations of the world" and have "the Jewish State of Palestine be one of the fruits of victory." The country's Arabs, by contrast, displayed a lack of interest in the celebrations, except for what High Commissioner John Gort labeled "extreme nationalists" stirring up anti-Jewish feeling among the masses. In Damascus, attempts were made to break into the Jewish quarter. In Beirut, Palestinian Arab soldiers serving with the Royal Kentish Fusiliers (the "Buffs") marched through the Jewish quarter carrying at the head of their procession a photograph of Haj Amin al-Husseini, the former Grand Mufti of Palestine who had instigated riots against the *yishuv* in 1920–1921 and 1929, spearheaded an unremitting groundswell of hatred towards the Zionist endeavor during the Arab Revolt of 1936–1939, and had actively collaborated with Germany during the war.[5]

By then, reason existed for the editors of *The New Judea* to assert that Jewry's post-war position caused hallelujahs to fade from their lips and that "we are in danger of becoming a death's-head at the feast." As early as April 6, World Zionist Organization (WZO) president Chaim Weizmann had received an extensive report from the Jewish Agency Executive in Jerusalem that approximately 1,250,000 of Europe's Jews had survived Hitler's relentless design at total annihilation. Their current physical and economic condition was "precarious in the extreme." Robbed of all their possessions, driven from their homes and decimated by hunger and disease, they faced virulent antisemitism. Poles stated quite frankly that "although the Germans have committed many evil things, they have done a good thing in exterminating the Jews," and that "it is only a pity that they were not able to complete the job." This applied equally to Hungary, where the native population had actively aided the Nazis in the mass deportation and murder of the country's Jews. Grave reports had also been received from Yugoslavia.

Within three days of the opening of the Agency's office in Rumania, 30,000 Jews had filed application for admission to Palestine. Day after day, the Agency was being beseeched from Belgium and Holland, France and Switzerland, the Balkans and Poland for immigration certificates. Aside from the "procrustean limits" of 10,300 legal permits remaining and already allotted from the maximum of 75,000 granted in the White Paper, new regulations in the exit or transit countries had held up transports indefinitely. "Stark despair" was gripping the survivors. "If another major disaster is to be prevented," the report ended, the British authorities had to take "an entirely new approach to the immigration problem."[6]

Churchill's Cabinet Committee on Palestine had resolved at this same moment, however, to defer once again a decision on the Palestine imbroglio. Minister Resident Middle East Edward Grigg, supported by Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, recommended that an international body (together with two Jews and two Arabs) frame a mandate or trusteeship for an undivided Palestine with a legislative council, and HMG retaining its present responsibility for administration and security. The last proviso echoed the Chiefs of Staff Subcommittee's 1943 memorandum that "the continued occupation of Palestine by British forces and the control of air bases and means of communication in that country after the war are essential." This stance received a recent endorsement from the Royal Institute of International Affairs at Chatham House, London, in favor of continuing the White Paper to secure Arab support of Britain's long-range strategic and economic interests in the region.

In like vein, High Commissioner Gort insisted on a maximum 2,000-monthly immigration quota for Jews until the global war's end. Colonial Secretary Oliver Stanley, although convinced that partition remained the only realistic solution for Palestine, was prepared to accept Gort's proposal on the amount of future certificates per month. HMG's Middle East ambassadors and military authorities preferred to defer any major policy changes for as long as possible, adhere to the White Paper policy, and have Britain holding executive control. The Cabinet Committee, also hearing Viceroy for India A. P. Wavell's observation that that country's 90 million Muslims would greatly resent any solution which would be "manifestly unacceptable" to Arab interests, decided on April 11 to postpone its deliberations until Eden returned from the convening in San Francisco of the Constituent Assembly of the United Nations Organization.[7]