

(April 8, 1935)

Progress of Palestine Under British Mandate

BY DR. ABRAHAM LEON SACHAR.

PRESIDENT JAMES:—Dr. Sachar, gentlemen, with our guest's indulgence, there is one item of business to be transacted.

(At this point a nominating committee was named and announcement made of the annual meeting in three weeks.)

Gentlemen, it is my pleasant duty today to welcome Dr. Sachar of the University of Illinois. It is Dr. Sachar's first visit to Toronto and he came here primarily to open the 1935 United Palestine Appeal. That is an appeal to bring more people to Palestine. Dr. Sachar's address today, I think, will be of real interest to us, and it will be especially so when one considers the terrible uncertainty, unrest and discontent throughout practically the entire world. I think his address is one that will give us great satisfaction even though it be in regard to a country so far away as Palestine.

Dr. Sachar is a graduate of Harvard and did post-graduate work at Cambridge. He comes to us as one who is recognized as an outstanding authority on English, European and British history. We welcome him and I have much pleasure in calling upon him to address you on the subject, "Progress of Palestine Under British Mandate." Dr. Sachar.

DR. SACHAR:—Mr. Chairman, gentlemen, I assure you that I am simply returning the chairman's graceful courtesy when I tell you the privilege I feel to address this group and to share in a program which has been rendered distinguished by a long series of fine speakers who have

come to you in the past. I appreciate the opportunity of speaking to you on a subject which is so close to me—the subject of Palestine.

Now, usually, when Palestine is mentioned, the image that is conjured up is of Biblical memories—romance of the Bible, religious memories and personality of prophets. Palestine means the embodiment of religious idealism to the Western world. I thought it might be interesting to turn from that and to speak rather of contemporary Palestine, for there is romance there as well. I shall not deal at all with the religious problem. I shall deal with our economic and social development.

It is a miracle to me that out of the bloodiest of all wars there came a homeland for the scattered Jewish people, under British mandate—that this little bit of land should have become the nucleus of a seventh Dominion which may come to fruition in the next decade, if Palestinian developments continue as favorably as they are. It has been a romance to me that in a period when a number of countries in the world have suddenly turned out their Jews and have attempted to establish a total Aryan state where a minority has got no opportunity to live, that there should have been created simultaneously a homeland where the Jews should have an opportunity to go and settle.

I found an entry in Premier Asquith's diary in the period when he was still Prime Minister in which he made this note. "Just returned from a cabinet meeting. Discussion of the Near East and the possibilities of settling the Near East after the war. Sir Herbert Samuel made the suggestion that when the war is over and the Turkish Empire is allocated that Palestine should be created as a Jewish homeland under the supervision of the British." And Mr. Asquith went on to make this very significant comment in 1915, "Is it not strange that a brain as methodical as that of Sir Herbert Samuel should be responsible for the rococo extravagance of a Disraeli." Two years later the Balfour Declaration was issued by His Majesty's Government offering Palestine as a homeland for the Jewish people provided the rights of nationalities already there

are not jeopardized. What brought that about? What was responsible for the change that took place in these two years? I suppose it was partly due to economic development and partly to the astuteness of British statesmen who knew if Palestine became a British possession it would be desirable to have a friendly people there, grateful to the British Government, under whose supervision they would work, so close to the heart of the Empire, so close to the Suez Canal, close to the Mediterranean. It would be useful to have a Western people, a Jewish people there, living under British supervision. That, I suppose, was a most important consideration.

But there was another consideration. The year 1917 was a black year for the Allies. The Italian armies had melted like butter and the German U-boats were becoming dreadfully effective, sinking 1,000,000 tons of freight every month. Russia had just collapsed and was ready to withdraw from the war. The whole Eastern Front was giving way and millions of prisoners were released from Russian prisons to fill in the gaps. The whole German army on the Eastern Front was transferred to the West and the South. All these factors were making the outlook dark for the Allied cause, and munitions failed. There was a great munition shortage. Lloyd George, then Prime Minister, was very much worried. There was T.N.T. but no formula had been perfected whereby it could be safely transported. And then someone told Mr. Lloyd George that there was a very distinguished chemist, Professor Haim Weitzmann of Manchester University, who could solve this difficulty. He was called in, Lloyd George states in his story of the war recently published. Dr. Weitzmann was set to work on this problem and his work made possible the safe transportation of T.N.T. which he placed at the disposal of the British Empire. Lloyd George asked what he wanted for that, thinking that he should receive personal recognition. Dr. Weitzmann answered, "I want nothing for myself. I want something for my people. I wish the British Government could undertake a mandate for Palestine and allow the Jewish people to create a homeland there under aegis of the British flag." And Lloyd

George says in his memoirs, that was a vital consideration. It was only a few months after that the Balfour Declaration was issued. In that sense, gentlemen, Palestine is built on T.N.T. Maybe that is why it is such a tumultuous country.

What has been done since Palestine became a Jewish homeland? What have the British done in Palestine? What have the Jews done? What has Palestine done to the Jews who have gone there? In the first place, I think the outstanding miracle is what has happened to the country economically. The Jews came into that country and the British came into that country after fifteen centuries of misrule — after fifteen centuries of negligence. Once upon a time we read that was a land flowing with milk and honey, but those who came there found no milk and honey, but malaria and a land of bleak stone. They took that little bit of land 50 miles by 200 and in 15 years converted it so that it now enjoys amazing economic prosperity. Marshes have been drained, swamps cleared and trees planted, while agriculture flourishes.

Palestine is the only country in the world today without a depression. It has a surplus of \$20,000,000. It sounds incredible in a century when every country has tremendous deficits, huge taxes. This has been achieved, partly because the Jews have been directed, as they have gone into the country, by British forces. Britain has built roads, united the isolated sections of the country one part to another, and the Jews have been permitted to come into the country only up to the limit of the absorptive capacity of the country. A man must have the economic capacity to live in that country. Of course, a great many come without resources and then the Zionist organization places resources at their disposal, gives them land on which to live and they pay back over a long term. The early pioneers are now beginning to pay back to the Zionist organization money that was given them as they settled on the land without any resources when they first came in.

I believe that the only worry that Jews and British alike have in Palestine today is the fact that economically it seems to be built a little too much on one product —

oranges. Of course, orange groves have brought prosperity. They are the finest oranges in the world and can compete with California. So many have gone into it and perhaps a little too many, but I suppose that will be curbed ultimately by the law of supply and demand. Of course, it is a difficult thing to develop. It takes seven years before orange groves give first fruit. That means a long investment. Only in the seventh year does the orchard give its fruit. That is why, they tell me, that young men are looking for young girls with old orchards. But apart from that I think there is very little worry. The agricultural development of Palestine has not only done something to the country but it has done a good deal for the Jew who has come in. Because of the difficulties of life, especially in eastern Europe, he has not been able to develop his agricultural outlook. That is not their fault. Naturally we find these people developed a commercial outlook. We grew out of the soil and we will go back to the soil. We are an agricultural people and we will prove to the world we can be creative in the sense of bringing produce from the soil.

Gentlemen, many of the Jews of the new Palestine have come cringing from the ghettos of Eastern Europe after eight centuries of terror. They have become tall and erect. Men, who dig the soil, give as well as take. That is the first miracle—what has happened to the economic life of Palestine and what has happened to the people. Secondly, I would say Palestine is becoming a haven of refuge for those who no longer have an opportunity in so many European countries.

What is happening in Germany is happening in most European countries. Where are these people to go, when a country with a liberal immigration policy such as Britain, finds herself unable to absorb them? There are millions in Britain. The United States would like to open its doors but cannot take them. There are 14,000,000 unemployed. France is flooded with refugees. Fortunately Palestine has opened its doors as widely as possible.

In the third place, I think we may well be proud of the intellectual and scientific development which has taken

place in the past 15 years. This week is the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus. It was really founded in 1920. The guns had scarcely ceased booming when the corner stone was laid. It meant nothing then. It was just a stone but it was a magnificent gesture to the people coming into the country.

The Hebrew University today is the outstanding university in the Near East where a scientific study of bacteriology and especially oriental and tropical diseases is made. It has already done much in fighting malaria and yellow fever and the hospitals are equipped with the finest materials. I think it is marvellous, the development in the first ten years—economic, scientific, medical and intellectual. It has not been due entirely to the British but to Adolf Hitler. He has helped to build the science of Palestine. He has thrown out men with Jewish blood and wants to Aryanize his country. Many are brilliant scientists. These are the men who have gone to Palestine and every little village has the unique opportunity of getting the finest services because these men have been driven out of other lands. I feel in the next decade there will be even more rapid development and Britain will have in Palestine a people not only economically grounded and sanely grounded but a people of intellectual and scientific tradition.

One other thing in mentioning these modern miracles. This unique experiment which I call a Co-operative Commonwealth. Palestine has a people who avoid an unrestrained capitalist system. It has no animosity to capitalism. It welcomes the capitalist coming in. It gives every opportunity for private initiative but the control of the country will not be purely under private influence. The control of the country will be under a co-operative. On the other hand, regimentation will be avoided. Palestine wants nothing to do with Communism and with the regimentation of these systems which ride roughshod over creative individualism and private initiative. It is building in other words, an unique system which, on the one hand, brings social control and does not allow capitalism to

get out of hand, but on the other hand, it does not allow regimentation to develop such as in Soviet Russia. The world, I think, will watch this experiment very carefully.

Then there is another problem in reference to Palestine—the problem of the Arab. After all there are these 50,000 Arabs in Palestine. It is all very well to speak of the mandatory territory and British supervision of Jews. When western civilization came into the country, it helped to develop the economic resources and social services. It is all very well, however, to build a Hebrew University and increase scientific opportunities in Palestine but what about the Native Arab? What is to happen to him? Many of us have been concerned. I feel, however, the Jew and the Arab can work out their problem together. The Arab has welcomed the western world. The Arab has seen the opportunities increase for employment because of western capital. The Arab was ignorant and sunk in misery but was perfectly well pleased because he knew no better. But then the British came after the war and then the Jews were allowed to come into the country. The Jews created labor unions and built a Commonwealth to a higher standard of living. The Jews were going to work early and coming back early, while the Arab was going to the fields early and had to work himself to the bone until late. They began to ask questions. The Jew spoilt Palestine for the exploiters who found they could not get away with it because a higher standard of living was demonstrated. Why is it not possible for two peoples who have so much in common to live together in peace?

There is one other problem which I should like to conclude with. It is this. Many of my friends are concerned because Jews who live in various parts of the world are interested in Palestine. Why should the Jew be concerned if he does not have a pluralistic loyalty. Can he be loyal to the country to which he comes and to some other land where he has lived? That question has been asked. We have many loyalties, but loyalty to one does not preclude loyalty to another. The Irishman who settles in Canada or the United States is deeply concerned about the welfare of the group from which he sprung, just as the Scotsman

constantly looks to Scotland. All these people have a cultural interest in the land from which they sprung. I believe the melting pot theory has long ago been exploded. In the United States we speak of our 100 per cent Americanism. We do not want a melting pot but the symphonic ideal. Every group has its instrument but, of course, we must play in harmony or we get a cacaphony. Instead of playing upon one instrument each one contributes that cultural note which makes the symphony rich and diversified. This, I am sure, is due to all those who think in the terms of an American civilization. It should be the attitude of those who think of a Canadian civilization—loyal to the country in which one lives but still tied by sentiment to the culture of the land from which one has sprung.

Gentlemen, let me as briefly as I can summarize the story of modern Palestine. It has been a dream suddenly come true. Suddenly out of the bloodiest of wars came the opportunity for a Jewish homeland under British supervision. The population has increased from 50,000 in 1920 to 3,350,000 in 1935. Under a fairly restricted immigration policy Palestine has developed scientifically, intellectually and economically and is giving expression to a rich cultural heritage.

PRESIDENT JAMES:—Dr. Sachar, we are extremely grateful to you for what, I think, may be termed one of the most interesting addresses the Club has had this season.