Lecture 6

Palestine 1939 to the UN Partition Plan 1947

I. Zionists after 1939 White Paper

A. Major Reorientation of Great Power supporter: form UK to US

1. Biltmore Program: switch to US

B. Major interpretation of White Paper 1939 reversal

1. greatest threat to Zionism: when/if great power backer sees its global/imperial Interests to be more with Arab and/or Muslim world than with Zionism

C. However, during WWII, Zionists fight with Brits against Nazism

1. Up to 30,000 Zionist Jews get formal military training (none for Palestinian Arabs)

D. Once war is over, Zionists switch to a campaign to drive Brits out by force

1. Brits trying to enforce restricted immigration of Jews of '39 White Paper
2. Attacks on Brits, Palestinians
3. e.g. King David Hotel in Jerusalem attack

E. Brits turn problem over to United Nations; determine to quit Palestine by 1948

II. Palestinian Arabs after 1939

A. Economic and Political devastation of Great Revolt

1. Most of Palestinian leaders either dead or in exile
2. Still no Palestinian "gov't in waiting" under British rule
3. No Palestinian police force or military; at best local village militias

III. The United Nations role

A. UNSCOP "Special Committee" ("Commission of Inquiry")

B. Determines Palestine Population to be 69% Palestinian, 31% Jewish (except Negev)

C. Determines Land ownership in Palestine to be 6% Jewish; rest Palestinian or "public"

D. Recommends partition of Palestine into Arab (45%) and Jewish (55%) "states"

E. UN General Assembly passes resolution Nov 1947 recommending this Partition Plan

F. UNSCOP Minority recommendation

IV. Reasons for Sympathy for Zionists, Ignoring of Palestinian Rights

A. Nazi Holocaust

B. Christians and Old Testament

C. Zionist advantage in America

D. Roosevelt and the offer of opening US to immigration of Jewish refugees

V. The Demographics of the UN Partition Plan

From Ben Gurion, Memoirs 1970

[When he came to Palestine in 1906] . . . There was nothing here . . . Nobody wanted it, certainly not the Palestinian Arabs who were placidly vegetating in their poverty . . .

Their subsequent indignation at the Jewish presence was fomented by special interest groups and the propaganda machines of the surrounding Arab nations. (p 26)

I believed . . . we held a clear title to this country. Not the right to take it from others (there were no others), but the right and duty to fill its emptiness (p 26)

[From early on, Ben Gurion realized that] . . . Sooner or later, Jews and Arabs would fight over this land, since intelligence and good will could have avoided all the bloodshed. [This tragedy will all be the fault of the Arabs, because of their] rigid traditions and blood code of the East (p 58)

[During the 1936-1939 Palestinian Rebellion, the Jewish forces fighting together with the British imperialists to suppress the rebellion] . .always restrained itself and confined its activities strictly to defense (p 82)

. . . in 1948 it was the Arab powers and not the Jews who exhorted the local Muslim population. We asked them to stay . . . [they left] . . . in fear of Arab threats of reprisal against "disloyalty"
. . . all this is hardly my affair . . . why I am indifferent to . . . the Palestinians' non-existent "quest for independence" p 83, quotations in original)

. . . [the idea that} . . . the Palestinians [have] . . . ever thought in terms of a country or has laid title to this land is not to be considered seriously . . .
[the truth of this is in the military record] . . . Jews are known to fight with passion . . . [but the] conduct of the Arab troops in . . . 1948 proves the lack of personal involvement [lack of real commitment to their land; that is, they were not war-like enough] p 118

. . . the Palestinian Arab shows no . . . emotional involvement [in their homes and lands in Palestine] . . . he is equally at ease whether in Jordan, Lebanon p 118