

REPORT
by His Majesty's Government in the
United
Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern
Ireland to the Council of the League of
Nations on the Administration of
PALESTINE AND TRANS-JORDAN
FOR THE YEAR
1928

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SECTION I.

PALESTINE.

I.--INTRODUCTORY.

Several important changes in the personnel of the Administration occurred during the year under review.

The Right Honourable Field Marshal Herbert Charles Onslow, Baron Plumer, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O., G.B.E., who had held the appointment of High Commissioner for Palestine and Trans-Jordan since the summer of 1925, proceeded on leave on the 30th of July prior to vacating that appointment.

Lieutenant-Colonel Sir John Robert Chancellor, G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O., D.S.O., his successor, arrived in Palestine on the 6th December.

Lieutenant-Colonel (now Sir) George Stewart Symes, C.M.G., D.S.O., Chief Secretary to the Government, was appointed Political Resident and Commander-in-Chief in Aden.

His successor, Commander Harry Charles Luke, C.M.G., Colonial Secretary, Sierra Leone, arrived in Palestine on the 19th July.

Group-Captain L. W. B. Rees, V.C., O.B.E., M.C., Officer Commanding Royal Air Force, Palestine and Trans-Jordan, was succeeded in November by Group-Captain P. H. C. Playfair, M.C.

Lieutenant-Colonel F. W. Bewsher, D.S.O., O.B.E., M.C., Commanding the Trans-Jordan Frontier Force, rejoined his Regiment in the Regular Army and the command of the Force passed to Major C. A. Shute, C.B.E., Second-in-Command.

Judge A. M. Grieve, Relieving President of District Court, died on the 11th July.

Captain O. Plunkett, Chief Justice of St. Lucia, was appointed in his place, but is acting for a time as Government Advocate.

Judge J. M. De Freitas, O.B.E., Police Magistrate and Inspector of Schools in the Gambia, was appointed Relieving President of District Court.

Mr. J. D. Shepherd, O.B.E., formerly in the service of the Sudan Government, was appointed Irrigation Officer for purposes of advising the Administration on the conservation of water supplies and their proper utilization for agricultural and other forms of development.

In the summer, the Administration were faced with the prospect that the revenue for 1928 would fall short of the estimate and that retrenchments and curtailment of public services might be necessary if Government revenues did not expand in 1929 and 1930. An Economy Committee was established with a view to advising on the possibility of lightening the annual burden on the country without unduly diminishing public services or dislocating various public and private activities. The Committee reported, but happily the prospect improved in the autumn of the year and it was not necessary to give effect to any but its minor recommendations.

Palestine is to be congratulated on a settlement with the Ottoman Public Debt Administration with regard to its

obligations under the Treaty of Lausanne. Under that Treaty it was necessary to make annual provision for 20 years, beginning with a sum of £P.186,000 and diminishing from time to time as the individual loans were amortized. Annual provision of this dimension would have been a heavy load on the country and would necessarily have led to drastic curtailment of services. The position now is, that for payments aggregating £820,000 the tax-payer is freed from the annual charge and need not suffer on that account deprivation of existing services.

During the year, a Railway Board, a Harbour Board, and a Standing Committee for Commerce and Industry were established. The two Boards will focus interest and activity so that broad lines of policy should emerge and be more easily determined. The Standing Committee provides a means, hitherto lacking, for the direct advocacy of commercial interests, as opposed to revenue interests, prior to the determination of economic policy.

The total revenue from Customs, which is by far the largest single source of income for the Administration, was approximately £P.900,000 for the year. The purchasing power of Palestine abroad is maintained by the introduction of funds for purposes of the Jewish National Home and for the many and various religious activities conducted in Palestine.

An agreement was arranged with the Government of Trans-Jordan which in brief provides that goods (other than leaf tobacco) may be imported into that territory in transit by rail through Palestine without the payment of any customs transit fee. This is a considerable boon for Trans-Jordan merchants.

A Commercial Agreement was concluded with the Government of Egypt which provides for mutual most-favoured-nation treatment in respect of the products and manufactures of either territory which are imported into the other. Palestine thus enjoys the differential Egyptian customs tariff.

The economic condition of Palestine during the year was not satisfactory. Drought and locust invasion depressed agriculture, and the effects of the cattle plague of 1926 had not yet disappeared. Shortage of rain in the winter of 1927-28 and the hot, burning wind in the early part of the

spring caused a very high percentage of failure of winter and summer crops in the Northern District and the Jerusalem Division.

The plight of the farmers was serious enough to command the largest measure of relief which the Administration could afford and in individual cases of practical total loss the corresponding proportion of the commuted tithe was altogether remitted. Where the hardship was less serious but still considerable, the collection of the excess of the actual commuted tithe over an estimated tithe was postponed. Parallel with the decision to postpone collection of tithe revenue, the Administration decided in such cases not to press for payment of instalments of agricultural loans and interest on deferred payment of commuted tithe was waived. These negative measures of relief were supplemented by a positive relief in the issue of loans in cash and kind to cultivators to a total of £P.20,000 repayable after the harvest of 1929 in a single instalment with interest at 5 per cent. Jewish cultivators received loans to the extent of £P.2,500 in cash.

In other directions, Palestine still suffered in the winter and early spring months from the repercussions of the uneconomic immigration of 1925. So, in a year which opened with 5,000 Jews in the ranks of the unemployed, no new elements could be added to the population in unskilled labour.

The Palestine Zionist Executive continued to face the situation with courage and, with the assistance of other Jewish institutions, was enabled to absorb a substantial proportion of the workless on undertakings involving an expenditure of about £P.25,000; in consequence, the Executive found it possible to cease the distribution of unemployment doles at the end of March. The Administration on its part again anticipated the normal programme of public works to provide certain special relief works; and, in addition, a number of the unemployed were absorbed by private enterprises. The cumulative effect of all these efforts was that a crisis was averted, and at the end of the year there were only about 1,700 persons out of work.

Concurrently with these activities, there was a movement of emigration among those who saw no prospect of establishing themselves satisfactorily in Palestine; and uneconomic enterprises either were closed down or were re-established

on sounder foundations.

At the same time, there was evidence of positive development in several directions. The number of orange plantations and the area of land under forest cultivation were increased. Certain factories enlarged their plant and augmented their output. Building operations were renewed and tourist traffic expanded. Fewer bills were protested than in 1927, which reflected an improving financial condition and a greater providence in regard to the utilization of capital.

Towards the end of the year, therefore, the period of transition, which it seemed to mark, had reached the stage of steady amelioration and it was decided that the position was sufficiently favourable to justify immigration in labour categories.

In the political sphere, the year passed with the tranquillity noted in the report for 1927. The growth of mutual tolerance of Jews and Arabs was to some extent retarded by the unfortunate incident on the Day of Atonement at the Western or Wailing Wall.

No steps have been taken to set up a representative legislature.

The principal feature of interest in the development of the Jewish National Home is the report of the Joint Survey Commission which was set up by the Zionist Organization in unison with the leaders of non-Zionist Jewry in America. The Committee of experts sent to Palestine in 1927 by the Commission submitted recommendations for a practical basis for agricultural development, administration of the National Home, finance, and immigration. Upon these recommendations the Commission presented a report designed to be the foundation of mutual co-operation in the development of Palestine by Zionist and non-Zionists. This report was accepted by the Greater Actions Committee of the Zionist Organization in Berlin and negotiations proceeded between Zionist and non-Zionists with a view to constructing an enlarged Jewish Agency on its basis.

TABLE OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS FOR THE QUINQUENNIAL PERIOD
1924-1928.

<i>Year.</i>	<i>Birth- rate per 1,000</i>	<i>Number of births registered.</i>	<i>Estimated population (Mid- year).</i>	<i>Number of deaths registered.</i>	<i>Death rate per 1,000.</i>	<i>Infantile mortality, i.e., deaths of children</i>
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	<i>living.</i>				<i>under 1 year of age per 1,000 births.</i>	
1924 ...	51.31	34,955	681,245	17,672	25.94	184.83
...	49.31	35,479	719,508	19,611	27.25	188.64
1925 ...	53.47	40,741	761,896	18,620	24.43	163.03
...	50.22	39,093	778,369	21,795	28.12	201.27
1926 ...	53.99	42,895	794,516	23,077	29.04	186.10
...						
1927 ...						
...						
1928 ...						
...						

COMPARATIVE TABLE OF BIRTHS AND DEATHS BY RELIGIONS
FOR THE YEAR 1928.

	<i>Christians.</i>	<i>Moslems.</i>	<i>Jews.</i>	<i>Others.</i>	<i>Total.</i>
Population*	78,463	557,649	149,554	8,850	794,516
...	1,486	19,575	1,830	186	23,077
Deaths... ..	18.93	35.10	12.23	21.01	29.04
...	3,172	34,011	5,308	404	42,895
Deaths per 1,000 of population...	40.42	60.98	35.49	45.64	53.98
Births... ..	499	6,921	514	49	7,983
...	157.31	203.49	96.83	121.28	186.10
Births per 1,000 of population...					
Deaths of Infants under 1 year of age					
...					
Infantile Mortality Rate... ..					

Note:--No figures are included for the nomadic Bedouin population, which in 1922 was estimated at 103,000.