

assimilationists?" asks the author) clung most vigorously to their "Britishness," while younger people were less unqualifiedly British and were content to be known as refugees from the Continent. Many of this group experienced a cultural gap vis-à-vis both Jewish and Gentile British society. They never encountered labeling as a result of accents or European habits, but nonetheless often felt as little "English" as the slightly older respondents (p. 183). This does not at all mean that any of the respondents considered Germany, a land toward which they harbor anger, resentment or ambivalence, as home. Their "Germanness" is cultural, a "continental" ethnicity distinguished not only with regard to self-perception but also with regard to clusters of cultural traits, ranging from language, literature and friendships to home decorations, dress and eating habits. Even the second group, less easily marked by German customs, maintained a certain allegiance to continental foods and styles. This was particularly apparent in the contrast between German and British Jews. The third group feels neither German nor English nor English Jewish. Members of this group specifically mention the continental character of their Jewishness and assert this against either English Jewishness or non-Jewish Englishness.

I welcome Berghahn's emphasis on the hidden, sub-conscious aspect of ethnic identity, which provides important psychological insights. While she may not be right about every German Jew in Britain (and she makes no claim for this), she has provided a careful and innovative approach to inter-group relations in general and has added to our understanding of the dynamics of German Jewish "assimilation" in particular.

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Alan Bullock, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary, 1945-1951*. New York/London: Norton, 1983. 896 pp.

William R. Louis, *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945-1951: Arab Nationalism, the United States and Postwar Imperialism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984. 803 pp. £45.00

These two excellent studies examine British foreign policy in the critical years 1945-51, the period during which Ernest Bevin served as foreign secretary. The two books neatly complement one another. While Louis's work, as the title indicates, focuses exclusively on events in the Middle East, and especially on the Palestine question, Bullock's study reviews the entire range of foreign affairs with which Bevin had to cope—from Moscow to Washington, from Berlin to the British Empire, from Istanbul to India and from Colombo to Korea. In Bevin's words: "The world is full of problems and I have to resolve them all at once." Bullock's

study furnishes a global perspective and also analyzes Bevin's relationships with Prime Minister Attlee, with Labour colleagues in the cabinet and with officials in the Foreign Office. We thus gain an intimate picture of Bevin's *modus operandi* and the reason why he enjoyed the complete confidence of the prime minister and why he elicited such fierce loyalty from his staff. He was "one of them." As Beeley, the Foreign Office adviser on the Middle East and Palestine said: Bevin underwent "a process which can be called the 'absorption' of a minister by his department" (Bullock, p. 171). This process had untold consequences for the saga of Palestine/Israel.

In relation to the Middle East, both books take as their point of departure the succinct but classic study by Oxonian scholar Elizabeth Monroe of Bevin's Arab policy. Bevin's aim, according to Monroe, was to abandon traditional imperialist policy and to replace it with one of partnership between Britain and the individual Arab states. He hoped thereby to assure both the protection of the Middle East from external foes and its development for the benefit of the Arab masses. It was Bevin's conviction that the foundations of a new and durable relationship could be established only if the standard of living of the *fellahin* was raised, thus immunizing them from the attraction of communism. Britain vitally needed Middle East oil to sustain the revival of its economy. In fact, the success of the entire Marshall Plan was critically dependent on the steady flow of Arab oil at a reasonable price. The Middle East was also vital as a strategic staging point in the growing confrontation with the Soviet Union in the cold war. According to the British chiefs of staff, the Middle East would serve as a springboard from which to launch an attack against the Soviet Union to supplement a projected attack directed from Western Europe. This made it essential that Britain retain control of bases in the region or that she be granted a right to return to the bases upon the outbreak, or threat, of hostilities. Only in this manner could the Middle East be secured against Russian encroachment and domination.

As both Bullock and Louis, however, make clear, this new approach by Bevin was but a pipe dream. For one thing, postwar Britain was destitute and completely incapable of financing a scheme for the industrialization of the Middle East sufficient to raise the standard of living of the Arab masses. In this connection, Bullock aptly quotes a remark by James Callaghan in 1976 at a dinner given by German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, "The mistake we made was to think we won the war" (p. 51, n. 1). Bevin seems to have been quite unappreciative of the lack of means which would fatally flaw his policy. He also seems to have never grasped the true nature of Arab nationalism, the essence of which was the sundering of the colonial tie with Britain. Partnership in place of empire may have sounded honorable to Bevin; to Arab nationalists, it sounded like a variation on the theme of colonial tutelage. For the peoples of the Middle East, Britain, and not the Soviet Union, was the enemy, and there was no coinage with which Britain could "buy off" Arab nationalism and maintain its hold on the Middle East.

This leads to another of Bevin's misjudgments in relation to the region. Bevin, and his chief advisor, Harold Beeley, firmly believed that Arab goodwill could be assured if Britain spurned a pro-Jewish state policy in Palestine. This, of course, was a great illusion. Nonetheless, it led Bevin to scuttle the report of the Anglo-

American Commission of Inquiry in 1946—despite his promise to implement the report if it was unanimously recommended—and it led him to reject any British role in relation to the partition scheme. As Louis so aptly says, Britain “would pursue a course of masterly inactivity” on partition (p. 473). These moves did not endear Bevin to the Arabs; they did, however, contribute to a deterioration of ties with the United States. In particular, personal relations between the British foreign secretary and President Truman were seriously affected by Bevin’s policies and his gratuitous remarks in connection with them. Here, too, Bevin failed to assess the situation correctly. As both authors point out, Britain’s policy on Palestine could not succeed without the active support of the United States, and an anti-Jewish policy could not command such support. Moreover, Bevin never seems to have understood that in the American system of government the president, rather than the secretary of state, has the final word. This elementary principle helps explain why Bevin was so disappointed in his attempts to wrest the Negev from Israel by means of the Bernadotte Plan. Bevin and Secretary of State Marshall had concurred (conspired?) in the fall of 1948 on the need to separate the Negev from Israel and to attach it to Transjordan. This would provide a line of land communication between Asian Arabia and African Arabia; it would also provide the British with direct access from the Mediterranean to Transjordan and to Iraq and the Persian Gulf. Bevin regarded this as a vital link in British defense strategy for the Middle East. But American endorsement of the Bernadotte Plan had never been cleared with President Truman. Louis claims that the Bernadotte Plan “had the President’s blessing” (p. 559). In fact, the president, in his message of 1 September 1948 (see *Foreign Relations of the United States*, pp. 1,366–1,369), agreed that Israel could not expect to retain *both* the Negev and the western Galilee. However, it would be up to Israel to make the choice. The Bernadotte Plan, as endorsed by Bevin and Marshall, entailed Israel’s surrender of the Negev regardless of its wishes. Truman had never given his assent to a policy of dismemberment of the Jewish state. Consequently, when Secretary Marshall announced on 21 September 1948 that the United States supported the Bernadotte Plan “in its entirety”—including compulsory surrender of the Negev by Israel—President Truman was subsequently compelled to revise that statement by declaring that he remained committed to the policy he had endorsed in the Democratic party platform, namely, that Israel should *not* be compelled to surrender territory awarded her by the United Nations. It would seem, therefore, that Louis is rather unfair to Truman in charging that he had perpetrated a “pigheaded and calamitous sellout” to the Israelis in allowing them to retain the Negev regardless of the Bernadotte Plan (p. 567). The president was merely conforming to the policy line he had established from the beginning—faithful adherence to the 1947 Partition Plan. It was the State Department which had strayed, both in March on the withdrawal from partition and in September on the Negev. Truman was consistent throughout.

A sounder appreciation by Bevin of the operation of the American system of government and of the intricacies of American domestic politics would have spared him much disillusionment. At least he would not so needlessly have forfeited the president’s goodwill.

This, of course, poses the question whether Bevin, in his outbursts against the Jews and against President Truman as a champion of the Jewish cause, was not manifesting a mean streak of antisemitism. Both Bullock and Louis reject this contention categorically, and there is no reason to believe that antisemitism was the leitmotif of Bevin's Palestine policy. His policy was directed to serving Britain's interests. In this he was guided by the conviction that the emergence of a Jewish state was antithetical to that interest. Thus, the question of Bevin's antisemitism is quite beside the point. He was as committed to denying Jewish nationalism as he was to placating Arab nationalism (in his own way). He was prepared to concede a national state to almost any people in the world—but not to the Jews.

The popular image of Bevin as a man incapable of emotion is apparently not tenable. He exhibited sensitivity to the plight of the suffering people of the world—but, remarkably enough, not to the suffering of the Jews. As Bullock notes, Bevin was deeply moved in 1945 when he visited Berlin and saw “as many refugees coming out of Berlin as were going in. . . . It was a pathetic sight,” he declared (p. 142). An even more revealing episode took place at a meeting the same year with Weizmann and Shertok. Bevin bewailed the loss of British life in Palestine: “I cannot bear English Tommies being killed. They are innocent.” When Weizmann referred to the millions of Jews who had been killed and were still dying in refugee camps, Bevin replied: “I do not want any Jews killed either, but I love the British soldiers. They belong to my class. They are working people” (p. 178). These comments reveal much about Bevin's attitude to Jewish homelessness and suffering. It was simply not his concern. His concern—to the exclusion of all else—was the British workingman and his standard of living. No matter that 6 million Jews had been annihilated in the Holocaust. No matter that the harsh and vigorous implementation of the White Paper in Palestine in the period 1939–45 had willy-nilly magnified the tragedy. No matter that the human dimension of the Jewish tragedy pointed in the direction of a national solution. Bevin was quite unmoved; in fact, he was immovable—since it was simply not his concern. Regardless, therefore, of any antisemitic motive, the insensitive remarks by Bevin (and Attlee) about “Jews, with all their suffering” trying “to get too much at the head of the queue” followed as a matter of course (Bullock, p. 181; Louis, p. 389). And it is to the credit of both these works that they frankly acknowledge Bevin's insensitivity in this sphere.

Both books represent a genre of historical writing which is rare these days. They are magnificently crafted with apt quotations to entrance the reader as he proceeds page by page through the saga of British foreign policy in the postwar period. Both books draw heavily on archival material in revealing the story of Britain's relations with the world at a time of her declining power. Israeli readers will always find accounts of British policy in the Middle East during the period of the founding of the Jewish state a fascinating subject. These two important books contribute handsomely to our appreciation of this epochal event.