



One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs Under the British Mandate

By Tom Segev, Haim Watzman

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A panoramic and provocative history of life in Palestine during the three strife-torn but romantic decades when Britain ruled and the seeds of today's conflicts were sown

Tom Segev's acclaimed works, *1949* and *The Seventh Million*, overturned accepted views of the history of Israel. Now Segev explores the dramatic period before the creation of the state, when Britain ruled over "one Palestine, complete" (as noted in the receipt signed by the High Commissioner) and when its promise to both Jews and Arabs that they would inherit the land set in motion the conflict that haunts the region to this day.

Drawing on a wealth of untapped archival materials, Segev reconstructs a tumultuous era (1917 to 1948) of limitless possibilities and tragic missteps. He introduces the legendary figures--General Allenby, Lawrence of Arabia, David Ben-Gurion--as well as an array of pioneers, secret agents, diplomats, and fanatics. He tracks the steady advance of Jews and Arabs toward confrontation and with his hallmark originality puts forward a radical new argument: that the British, far from being pro-Arab, as commonly thought, consistently favored the Zionist position, and did so out of the mistaken--and anti-Semitic belief that Jews turned the wheels of history.

Rich in unforgettable characters, sensitive to all perspectives, *One Palestine, Complete* brilliantly depicts the decline of an empire, the birth of one nation, and the tragedy of another.

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Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1056723 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Metropolitan Books
- Published on: 2000-11-14
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.60" h x 1.92" w x 6.36" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 592 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Topicality is never an issue where Israel and the Palestinians are concerned. The arguments--not to mention bloodshed--over Jewish and Muslim nationhood and land rights have been going on for centuries and, whatever the best intentions of the current peace process, they will probably go on for centuries to come. Both parties fanatically believe they have an inalienable historical right to statehood on the land in question and both regard Jerusalem as a holy city. As befits the disenfranchised, the Palestinians are slightly more open to a negotiated settlement, but the Israelis remain intransigent about handing over any but the most inhospitable of scrubland and the impasse remains. In the battle between the bullets and the ballot box, the bullets are winning hands-down.

Tom Segev is one of Israel's most notable historians and journalists--one of the few to strive for any sense of objectivity in his writings--so a new book by him is always worth waiting for. *One Palestine, Complete* is a detailed account of Palestine under British rule from 1917 to 1948, the critical period in the modern history of the region that led up to the creation of the state of Israel. Segev begins by carefully detailing Britain's well-known inconsistencies in dealing with both the Jews and the Arabs--to both of whom it had appeared to promise, if not the world, at least the country after independence was granted--and goes on to make a convincing case that because Palestine fell into the category of an emotional rather than self-interested colonial possession, the Brits hoped the situation would unwind to everyone's advantage.

Where Segev departs from the historical norm is in his assertions that whatever the British may have said to the Palestinians, their actions were uncompromisingly pro-Zionist from the start. This, he claims, was done out of the mistaken, anti-Semitic belief that the Jews controlled business and turned the wheels of history, rather than from a recognition of the rightness of their cause. Be this as it may, it is at best a partial explanation. Before World War II, Britain was on the verge of handing over Palestine to the Arabs, and Segev completely downplays the impact of Western war guilt over the Holocaust that led to a huge growth in support for an independent Israeli state at the expense of Palestinian rights.

Even so, *One Palestine, Complete* offers a thoughtful and dramatic account of the evolution of two nationalist movements that seem destined never to be reconciled. With a past like this, what hope is there for the future? --John Crace, *Amazon.co.uk*

From Publishers Weekly

"The British entered Palestine to defeat the Turks; they stayed there to keep it from the French; then they gave it to the Zionists because they loved 'the Jews' even as they loathed them, at once admired and despised them, and above all feared them. They were not guided by strategic considerations, and there was no orderly decision-making process," claims Segev in revealing the thrust of his argument that the contemporary problems between the Arabs and the Jews over the issue of a promised homeland were exacerbated by the interventions of the British empire between the two world wars. Segev, author of the well-known and highly controversial books *1949* and *The Seventh Million*, is one of the "new historians" who have revised and demythologized the history of modern Israel. The reason the British feared the Zionists, Segev maintains, was that they believed that the Jews had inordinate political power around the world. Moreover, he suggests that the Arab rebellions of the late 1930s were instrumental in convincing the British to leave the reins to the Jewish Agency and even hypothesizes about how the British would have reacted if the Arabs had had a political infrastructure in place similar to that of the Jews. Although his argument would be more convincing

had he given greater credence to the Palestinian perspective, Segev is an excellent historical writer who presents a compelling and timely discussion of a well-trodden subject. Even if it does not stir as much controversy as his earlier work. (Nov. 14)

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From Library Journal

In the past 50 years, Arab-Israeli relations have been marked by several wars and internecine conflicts.

Understanding the events in Palestine during the first half of the 20th century, which shaped the future of this conflict, is critical to understanding the contemporary obstacles confronting the Middle East peace process.

Israeli journalist Segev (1949: *The First Israelis*) has written a detailed, evenhanded account of these events, which led to the establishment of the state of Israel and the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem. By relying on a wealth of archival material, the author demonstrates how and why the British ultimately favored the Zionist forces over the Arabs and how they helped the nascent Zionist movement defeat the Palestinians and other Arabs. Highly recommended for both academic and large public libraries.

-DNader Entessar, *Spring Hill Coll., Mobile, AL*

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