

# I - Introduction

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IN AUGUST 1936, the British Government, as the Mandatory Power in Palestine, appointed a Royal Commission under the chairmanship of Lord Peel, "To ascertain the underlying causes of the disturbances which broke out in Palestine in the middle of April; to inquire into the manner in which the Mandate for Palestine is being implemented in relation to the obligations of the Mandatory towards the Arabs and the Jews respectively; and to ascertain whether, upon a proper construction of the terms of the Mandate, either the Arabs or the Jews have any legitimate grievances upon account of the way in which the Mandate has been, or is being implemented; and if the Commission is satisfied that any such grievances are well founded, to make recommendations for their removal and for the prevention of their recurrence."<sup>1</sup>

Among the documents which the Palestine Government was asked to prepare for submission to the Commission upon its arrival in Palestine on 11 November 1936 were statistical data relating to land ownership in Palestine as between Jews and non-Jews. The Department of Land Settlement, being the authority responsible for the country's fiscal assessment records from which this information had to be extracted, was approached by the Commission's liaison officer, Mr. L.Y. Andrews,<sup>2</sup> then Development Officer of the Government, to make available the data needed. The schedules when submitted were treated as 'strictly secret.'

In 1943, the Palestine Government decided to make such statistical information public, and the Department of Land Settlement thereupon issued the first printed 'Village Statistics' showing the position as on 1 April 1943. Circulation of this publication was limited to government offices and a few interested private organizations.

In 1946, an Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry was appointed jointly by the British and United States Governments to examine, among other things, the political, economic and social conditions of Palestine and to make recommendations for a settlement.<sup>3</sup>

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(1) *Cmd. 5479* — Report of the Royal (Peel) Commission.

(2) It is believed that the idea of the partition of Palestine, as later recommended by the Royal Commission, was inspired by Mr. Andrews whose friendly relations and cooperation with the Jewish Agency were then no secret. Particulars of the location of Jewish land holdings were needed by the Commission to decide the boundaries of their proposal for a 'Jewish state.'

(3) *Cmd. 6808* — Report of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry.