

# Middle East Expert Affirms JNF's Strategic Role In Founding Of State Of Israel



NEW YORK, N.Y. — The founding of the State of Israel was in large part a result of the strategic land acquisition policies and practices of the Jewish National Fund. According to Middle East scholar and author Kenneth W. Stein, "It is fair to say that the State of Israel could not have been declared in 1949 without the establishment of a Jewish national territory" — a territory bought parcel by parcel by the veteran Zionist land development agency now in its 84th year.

Dr. Stein, associate professor of Middle

Eastern history at Emory University, contends that the issue of land control is central to a full understanding of Israel's emergence as a modern political entity. In his book, *The Land Question in Palestine, 1917-1939*, recently published to critical acclaim, Dr. Stein stresses the purchase of land — particularly contiguous parcels of land — by Zionists, as well as their grasp of the intricacies of Palestinian and British Mandate regulations on land control, as elements essential to the eventual founding of the State. Dr. Stein, during a brief visit to New York, outlined these views to JNF's Board of Directors at their November meeting.

"The dream of a Jewish national home," he said, "was fulfilled by Zionists whose conviction, skills and stamina enabled them to succeed against the challenges they faced from local Palestinian authorities and the British Mandate government." Drawing on his archival research for his book, he documented for the board members how land was sold not only by impoverished Arabs to raise some capital, but also by economically solvent Arabs who sold their properties "enthusiastically, voluntarily and collusively," frequently in order to maintain their local political status and accustomed standards of living. In addition, the British were largely ineffective in regulation such land sales. The Jewish National Fund was founded in 1901 to be the instrumentality for land procurement. It currently holds 92% of the land of Israel in trust for the Jewish people.

Dr. Stein got the idea for his book 13 years ago when he "literally tripped over a collection of dusty boxes" in a hall outside the Israel State Archives library. In these he discovered what has turned into one of the few chronologically complete records for the Mandate period on land transactions in Palestine. The collection, con-

tained in some two thousand boxes, provided "the raw material for understanding the mechanism of change in history," he told the JNF board.

The *Land Question in Palestine, 1917-1939* is the first scholarly book to systematically treat this complex and often bewildering topic and will be a foundation for any further scholarly work. Praising Dr. Stein's groundbreaking study, *The New York Times Book Review* said, "It is not easy to explain laws and land transfers in a society with a mixed population governed partly by remnants of Ottoman Islamic customs and partly by rules imposed by the British... Those seeking to understand this complex subject will find their patience rewarded." The book is published by The University of North Carolina Press.

Dr. Stein (who also directs former President Jimmy Carter's project at Emory for the study of the Arab-Israeli dispute) spoke to the JNF board with great animation and cogency. When asked where he thought his research would take him he replied that there was at least ten more years of work to be accomplished on the land control question. "I've got enough material for at least two or three more books," he said with a grin.

## Officials See Positive Developments In Israel-Egypt Relations

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such a meeting is that it be "well prepared" in advance and that the border dispute with Israel over the Taba region is resolved beforehand. Other conditions are the withdrawal of the Israel Defense Force from south Lebanon and some progress toward resolving the Palestinian issue.

Israeli policy-makers believe the unity government's firm intention to pull the IDF out of Lebanon and current measures to improve the quality of life of the Palestinians on the West Bank should satisfy Egypt's conditions.

With respect to Taba, Israel has proposed joint administration of the tiny strip of beach on the Gulf of Aqaba near Eilat pending final determination of its legal ownership through the processes of conciliation and arbitration set forth in the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty of 1979. Taba, which Egypt maintains is part of Sinai, is presently inside Israel's boundaries.

BONN (WNS) - The cornerstone of a 15 million Mark new Jewish Community Center was laid in Frankfurt in the presence of local civil and Jewish community leaders. The city of Frankfurt is providing 7.5 million Marks toward its construction. Mayor Walter Wallmann, who spoke at the ceremonies, hailed the contributions of many generations of Jews in Frankfurt.

JERUSALEM (WNS) — The Knesset House Committee has decided to reduce the overnight hotel allowance for Knesset members who live outside Jerusalem but must spend the night there to attend morning sessions. The reduction is from \$50 to \$35 per night which means that MKs must stay at a three star rather than a five star hotel — unless they want to dig into their own pockets to pay the difference.

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