



UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI SALERNO

DIPARTIMENTO DI STUDI UMANISTICI

Dottorato di Ricerca in Storia - X ciclo

Tesi di Dottorato

*LA SANTA SEDE E LA QUESTIONE PALESTINESE:
GLI ANNI DEL MANDATO BRITANNICO (1920-1948)*

Coordinatore
Prof. Massimo Mazzetti

Relatore
Prof. Giuseppe Maria Viscardi

Candidata
Lucia Russo
Matr. 8882700021

Anno Accademico 2010-2011

THE HOLY SEE AND THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION:
THE YEARS OF THE BRITISH MANDATE (1920-1948)

Abstract

The objective of this work is the reconstruction of the Holy See's position with respect to the Palestinian issue, during the years of the British Mandate. The line of argument on the issues analysed has been structured on the basis of the following questions: How was the relationship between the Holy See and the Zionist project, and how much weight did it have in determining the attitude of the theological factor? How did the Vatican react after the Conference of San Remo when a Mandate was conferred on Great Britain for Palestine and to what extent did it influence the Vatican's position and its relations with the British government? Great Britain was a supporter of Zionism and the Protestant and schismatic, but they also had to consider the views of the Arab-Catholic communities of the Holy Land. What was the reaction against the rise of Arab nationalism in Palestine on the one hand and anti-Semitism in the heart of Christian Europe on the other? What attitude was assumed by the Vatican before the British withdrawal, which reopened the international debate on the future political territory of the Holy Land?

The involvement of the Apostolic See in Middle Eastern Affairs and her presence in the Holy Land of Christian minorities, (descendants of the first groups of believers) and the interest in the protection of Jerusalem and the Holy Places is little known. Lack of studies to date on the organic position of the Holy See with respect to the Palestinian issue during the British Mandate is due in part to the inaccessibility to the Vatican archival sources, subsequent to January 22, 1922. The reconstruction of this historical period has been analyzed in several archival collections that are rich in resources, although they are largely unknown and poorly studied.

One of the most debated and controversial question for historians is related to the incidence of the theological factor on the Vatican's attitude with respect to Zionism. The analysis of archival sources has shown that in regards to the years of the British Mandate and the Vatican's anti-Zionist arguments, the principal theological dissertation on the killers of Christ was virtually absent, and this leads to a dismissal of the theory of a direct link between anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism. The Holy See was absolutely not averse to the Zionist ideal whose aim was to build a Jewish homeland in Palestine on an equal footing with the existing population. However, the real face of Zionism that took over the Mandate was above all due to British policy, sacrificed on the altar of the Balfour Declaration and the rights of Palestinians.

As the aspirations of the Vatican precluded an Arab or Jewish sovereignty they did not oppose the division of Palestine, provided it guaranteed the protection of Jerusalem and its surroundings. As for the political-territorial Holy Land, the Vatican's attitude was idealistic and pragmatic despite their desire for a clear preference for a unitary solution that would include guarantees for other Holy Places of Christianity spread throughout Palestine.

ARCHIVES

Vatican Secret Archives, Vatican City

Archive of the Apostolic Delegation in Jerusalem and Palestine

Archive of the Apostolic Nunciature in Paris

Vatican Information Office (Prisoners of War, 1939-1947)

Archives of the Sacred Congregation for Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs, Vatican City

Historical Archive of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, Rome

General Archive of the Order of Friars Minor, Rome

Archive of the Congregation *de Propaganda Fide*, Vatican City

Acts and Documents of the Holy See concerning the Second World War, 11 volumes, Vatican City, Vatican Publishing House, 1970-1981

Historical Archives of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rome