



“A small bug is a big bug waiting to pop out ”

Lawrence Fisher, 1985

Lawrence Fisher

Newsletter 9

Welcome back. It is good that you are here today because we have a new story.

Our story began 100 years ago when as you know, in 1917, during WW1, a British General named Edmund Allenby, managed to drive out the last Turkish occupation forces from our area, thus ending 400 years of occupation. He commanded a military force known as the **Egyptian Expeditionary Force** or **EEF**; remember that name because we will get back to it soon. The force was established the previous year, specifically for the invasion of Sinai and Palestine.

We will not go into various historical details but we will talk about interesting aspect. With the Turks out, the British became the new occupiers and both soldiers and civilians were living in the Holy Land, and of course people wanted to send messages out. Since there were no emails in 1917, they had to write letters. But they had no stamps; the Turks had been driven out. So what were they going to do? Simple, use the stamps already used by the armed forces, the EEF stamps. These stamps were in use since the establishment of the force. After the League of Nations gave the British the mandate to prepare our area for the Jewish state, General Allenby transferred the administration to the representative of the British government, the High Commissioner to Palestine, Lord Herbert Samuel. Lord Herbert Samuel arrived in Palestine in 1920, that is, a hundred years ago.



Now things are starting to get complicated. Herbert Samuel saw that there was no indication on the stamps to show that the letter had been sent from Palestine and that, of course, was inappropriate. So he decided to add on overprint on the stamp itself.

After consultations, Herbert Samuel decided that the overprint would be in three languages, Hebrew, English and Arabic! The word Palestine in three languages! Houston, we have a problem, the Jews wanted the Land of Israel to be used and not Palestine, their claim was that the territory was promised to them, not only in the Balfour Declaration but also in the San Remo Agreement. The Arabs objected because it was a political statement. Resentment rose not only with the British but also with the Jews. The British did not like the squabbling and said that the League of Nations named the area Palestine, and when the Jews become the masters, they can call the area whatever they want. So they agreed to a compromise, "Eretz Israel Palestine". Of course, if you add all that text on an overprint, it becomes very crowded and illegible and therefore they reached another compromise "El Palestine". Again The Jews accepted the compromise and stamps were printed as tests; actually these stamps are quite rare. The local Arab residents disagreed believing that this was still a political statement and they rioted, violently. The British immediately caved in and offered another compromise, "Palestine El". This was a good indication to the Arab inhabitants and they realized that riots were a weapon for everything. You don't get what you want, violent riots, BLM anyone?



Now the million dollar question is which language should be at the top and which at the bottom. Herbert Samuel decided that English would be in the middle to separate the squabbling kids, but still which language would be at the top, Arabic or Hebrew? After a struggle, the Jews gave up and Arabic was printed at the top. During printing, several errors occurred and the overprint was shifted upwards, so you can find examples in which Hebrew is at the top. An example of a stamp with an error appears on the right.



They started printing the overprint on the stamps and residents started sending out letters, and all of a sudden they noticed a problem. OMG, the word Palestine in Arabic (فلسطين) is smaller than the word Palestine EI. What? Couldn't they notice this during the previous riots? They only now noticed this? The fact is that yes, they were so angry about where to put the Hebrew that they did not notice that in essence the name in Arabic is less prominent (example of a stamp on the right). So how do you respond to this problem? Riots!! After all, everyone knows that if you do not riot, the media does not care and if the media doesn't care, it does not exist. So what did the British decide to do? Very simple, increase the font of the word Arabic word. So after a few months, the entire inventory of the first overprint was withdrawn from all post offices and a new overprint was introduced. After a few months, the stock of stamps ran out and it was reprinted again but with slight difference. Due to the difference in prints, they received official names such as Jerusalem I, Jerusalem II, and Jerusalem III. Very original, I know, but it came from the company printing the overprints and the company that had the job was the Greek Orthodox monastery in Jerusalem.



It was then decided that the overprints would be printed in the same printing house as other stamps of the British Empire, meaning in London. In the book by Nabil Shaath, yes the same one who was once involved in negotiations with Israel, he wrote that the reason it was moved to London was due to pressure from the Zionists to take jobs from an Arab printing house. Is a Greek monastery considered to be Arab? Not sure, but Archbishop Capucci belonged to the same church and if you don't know who he is, then stay tuned for another story in the future.

Does the story end here? It's a good place to end but unfortunately it doesn't. Why unfortunately and here we have an historical distortion. In 2018 the Palestinian Authority, which had decided to issue stamps with the name, the State of Palestine, issued a stamp for "100 years since the first Palestinian stamp" and the stamp depicted the high value of the original EEF stamp. And here's the issue, in the official declaration of the issue and the First Day Cover, instead of the correct interpretation of the letters EEF, they called it Education, Endowment and Foundation, the same letters but changed them without any historical basis. And in which printing house were the stamps printed? The official printing company of Bahrain, our new buddies. A little birdie told me that the Palestinian Authority was so angry with Bahrain as a result of their peace agreement with us that they demanded that the PA stamps would no longer be printed in Bahrain, but at a local printing house. They were getting the printing for free, now you are going to pay for it.



Going back to the matter of distorting historical information and you're probably asking, as I was asked, who cares? Distortions in stamp catalogs and articles refer to stamps as a historical tool. So you're probably asking yourself again who cares and if so, I suggest you read George Orville's 1984 book.

If you enjoyed this story, tell your friends, enjoyed it even more, feel free to share. If you didn't enjoy it, maybe you will enjoy the next one.

So there you go, that's the story of the day, but there is more, much more. Until next time, stay tuned.

Comments may be sent to lf.stamps@gmail.com

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