

THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY AND ZIONISM:

1917 - 1947

by

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BA., University of British Columbia, 1961

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The British Labour Party and Zionism, 1917 - 1947.

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Abstract

The birth of Israel on May 15, 1948 was a singular victory for political Zionism which held that only a Jewish state could permanently resolve the Jewish question.

Along the road to Jewish statehood Zionism sought and received assistance from individuals, groups and nations around the globe. None proved to be more vital than that provided by Great Britain whose issuance of the Balfour Declaration and assumption of the Palestine Mandate comprised the sine qua non for the Jewish National Home.

In recognition of Britain's pre-eminent role Zionists consciously cultivated her body politic. Labour Zionism, for socio-ideological reasons felt most comfortable in seeking understanding and support from its perceived counterpart, the British Labour Party. By 1929 Labour Zionism felt 'confident' about the degree of British support it could expect on issues deemed 'vital' to its program.

That confidence was severely shaken by the Passfield White Paper (1930), and although the ensuing 'crisis' was subsequently defused, the fundamental differences it revealed were never permanently resolved. The remainder of the decade witnessed a renewed rapport culminating in a shared opposition to the land purchase and immigration restrictions of the last pre-war Conservative Government policy statement on Palestine -- the White Paper of 1939.

During the war Zionism enjoyed enhanced British Labour party support. It reached a zenith at the Labour Party's Annual Conference in 1944 where the plenum approved a resolution calling for a Jewish state in all of Palestine.

In mid 1945 a newly elected British Labour Government, to the amazement and disappointment of its Zionist friends, chose to maintain the 1939 White Paper while it searched for a workable alternative of its own. In the course of that search, which included an attempt to have the United States share in the responsibility for a solution,

much of the Zionist community came to perceive the British Government as bent upon a betrayal of British Labour's 'promises' to Zionism. As a consequence, the years 1945 -1947 were marked by an extremely painful confrontation between the sides -- one which was effectively ended with Britain's abandonment of the mandate.

This study traces the evolution and dynamic of the relationship effected by Zionism and the British Labour Party during the period 1917 - 1947.

For My Parents

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Introduction

The birth of Israel has given rise to a substantial body of work devoted to Britain's stewardship of the Palestine Mandate. Unfortunately, many of the works produced in the first two decades post '48 have tended to be more polemical than investigative while their authors were handicapped by two factors: lack of access to official archives and a dearth of authoritative bibliographic work.

In the last decade the aforementioned difficulties have been largely overcome. This study was made possible because of the resources contained in London at the British Library, the Public Record Office and the Labour Archives as well as the existence of some superb political biographies of which two are highly recommended. These are: Kenneth Harris' Attlee and Alan Bullock's Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary, 1945 - 54.

The work which served as the precursor to this thesis is Joseph Gorny's The British Labour Movement and Zionism: 1917 - 1948 and was very valuable for the inter-war years. However, after 1939 Gorny does not make sufficient use of the available documentation and one would be well advised to utilize Nicholas Bethell's The Palestine Triangle: The Struggle Between the British, the Jews and the Arabs 1935 - 1948, Yehuda Bauer's From Diplomacy to Resistance - A History of Jewish Palestine 1939 - 45 and Michael J. Cohen's Palestine and the Great Powers, 1945 - 1948.

Two works which are also highly recommended are J.C. Hurewitz's The Struggle for Palestine (1952) despite the author's lack of access to official archives, and Roger Louis' The British Empire in the Middle East 1945 - 1951: Arab Nationalism, The United States, and Postwar Imperialism (1984).

Chapter 1

Formative Years (1900 - 1928)

The publication of Dr. Theodore Herzl's Der Judenstaat (the Jews' state) in early 1896¹ marked the birth of modern (political) Zionism.² His treatise addressed the Jewish question -- a rubric for the increasingly sorry and estranged condition of Jewish life in most of Eastern Europe. Herzl observed:

We have sincerely tried everywhere to merge with the national communities in which we live, seeking only to preserve the faith of our fathers. It is not permitted us....In our native lands where we have lived for centuries we are still decried as aliens.

He also argued that:

The Jewish question persists wherever Jews live in appreciable numbers. Wherever it does not exist, it is brought in together with Jewish immigrants....our appearance gives rise to persecution. This is the case and will inevitably be so, everywhere even in highly civilized countries -- see for instance, France -- so long as the Jewish question is not solved on the political level [emphasis added].³

Herzl asserted that the rising tide of European anti-Semitism was rooted in an essentially ineradicable Gentile perception that Jews were immutably foreign, and for that reason the traditional liberal solutions of emancipation and assimilation were doomed to failure. Herzl converted the notion of Jews as alien into a corporate identity -- the Jewish people -- whose 'question' could only be solved by the legal acquisition of a territory (non European) sufficient for national purposes.

Shortly after Der Judenstaat appeared, Herzl commenced an extensive search for influential Gentile and Jewish support for his territorial scheme; his efforts availed little. His attempts to gain an audience with the German Kaiser failed. The Ottoman Sultan would not countenance Herzl's proposals for a Jewish Palestine. Anglo-Jewish leaders were unmoved, and the Baron Edmond de Rothschild turned him

down. The western wing of Hoveve Zion⁴ (Lovers of Zion) sided with the Baron whose support had proved crucial for their policy of practical Zionism which called for gradual infiltration and colonization in the ancestral homeland -- the land of Israel (Palestine). But Herzl did win acclaim from Jewish communities, particularly in eastern Europe, where leaders of Hoveve Zion hearkened to his message. With their support a call for an international Jewish assembly to discuss his proposal led to the first Zionist congress being held in Basle, Switzerland (August 29-31, 1897). There, 197 self appointed delegates agreed on a program "to secure a publicly recognized legally secured home in Palestine for the Jewish people."⁵ They also established the World Zionist Organization (W.Z.O.) as their chief political instrument. Herzl was elected W.Z.O. president and presided over all subsequent Zionist congresses until his death on July 3, 1904.

In the ten years prior to the Great War Zionism slowly gained adherents among Jewry. At the same time it stirred up significant opposition. Most of the Orthodox community resisted Zionism because of its secular nature. Many secular Jews, on the other hand, could not accept the Zionists' insistence on leaving Europe. They preferred to put their faith in radical or revolutionary movements which promised them cultural toleration and socio-political equality. Prominent among these groups was the socialist-oriented Bund (General Jewish Labour Federation of Russia and Poland) which was rabidly anti-Zionist.

In opposition to the Bund, other Jewish socialists tried to synthesize their doctrines with Zionism. Between 1897 and 1905 a Jewish Socialist Workers Party (Poale Zion) emerged in eastern Europe, and by 1907 a World Confederation of Poale Zion had been formed. Its 1909 program called for

the abolition of capitalism, the complete socialization of the means of production through economic and political struggle, and the territorial solution of the Jewish problem through mass settlement in Palestine.⁶

Herzl's political heirs carried on lobbying for Zionism in those promising circles -- Jewish and Gentile -- to which they could gain access. In England, which had given Zionism its first public recognition via the 1903 offer of territory in East Africa, Zionists tried to win support among members of the intellectual and political establishments. Poale Zion, with its commitment to a socialist (Labour) Zionism, concentrated on winning friends inside the British Left with emphasis on those bodies that comprised the Labour Representation Committee (L.R.C.), a federation created in 1900 out of some unions of the Trades Union Congress (T.U.C.), the Independent Labour Party (I.L.P.), the Fabian Society and the Social Democratic Federation (S.D.F.). In 1906 the L.R.C., which had no unifying ideology or program beyond claiming a mission to press working class concerns in parliament, changed its name to the British Labour Party. When World War I broke out the British Labour Party displayed little prospect of being able to challenge the predominance of the Liberals and Conservatives. In the last pre-war election (December 1910) Liberal-Labour and Labour received 7.1% of the popular vote for 42/670 seats.

The question of participation in the Great War divided British labour. When its parliamentary leader, Ramsay MacDonald, could not agree with his party's support for supplementary estimates, he resigned⁷ and Arthur Henderson was elected in his place.⁸ In May 1915 Labour accepted an invitation to join the Government, and Henderson entered the Cabinet as President of the Board of Education.

In August 1916 Henderson became official Government labour adviser. When Prime Minister Asquith was replaced by Lloyd George, the latter offered Labour attractive inducements, including a seat for Henderson in the Inner War Cabinet, to join his coalition, and Labour accepted. In 1917 Henderson lost his cabinet position over participation in an International Socialist Conference called to discuss war aims. G.N. Barnes took his place. Henderson chose to resume only the post of Party Secretary and with the assistance of Sidney Webb, among others, turned to the task

of preparing the party for the post-war political struggle. To that end he helped produce three significant documents: a new party constitution,⁹ a Statement of War Aims and a program for domestic change entitled Labour and the New Social Order. In the eyes of one observer, the thinking of the Party of 1914 had been transformed.

The senseless slaughter of the First World War....led the Labour Party to commit itself publicly to a comprehensive program...a new social order that might transform capitalism into socialism.¹⁰

The Great War, also had a dramatic impact on Zionist fortunes. From the movement's initial perspective the war was a disaster. The call to arms divided Jews along lines of citizenship and hampered the cohesiveness of the W.Z.O. Ottoman entry into the conflict added to Zionist concerns. It became difficult to transfer funds raised abroad to Palestine and Jewish immigration ceased. In addition, Turkish actions against enemy aliens (many Jewish colonists were Russian nationals) reduced the Jewish community.

At the same time the consequences of an Ottoman defeat offered some tantalizing possibilities to those whose causes (e.g., Arab, Armenian, Zionist) would best be served by dismembering the Ottoman Empire. Such thoughts were also being entertained by leaders of several European states. In 1915 the British made somewhat guarded commitments to Arab national aspirations in exchange for military assistance. In 1916, energized by Russian claims to certain Ottoman territories, Britain and France arrived at a scheme (Sykes-Picot Agreement of May 1916) for a post-war sharing out of other portions of the Ottoman Empire. In 1917 the British chose to make a pledge to Zionism as a means of winning greater Jewish support particularly in Russia and the United States for the war effort. It took the form of a letter from the Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour, to Lord Rothschild, honorary head of the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland. The Balfour

Declaration was issued on November 2, 1917 and published in the English press on November 9.¹¹ Its substance was contained in one weighty sentence.

His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.¹²

Almost three months prior to the publication of the Balfour Declaration, the British Labour Party's Special Conference which met on August 10, 1917 was asked to approve a policy draft entitled Memorandum on the War Aims. It was intended, should approval be gained, to submit the Memorandum to the Conference of Allied Socialist and Labour Parties scheduled for London in February, 1918. The nineteen-clause proposal was intended to serve as a just basis upon which to end the war and construct a post-war settlement. Clause XII addressed the unenviable lot which, by mid-1917, marked the condition of the Jewish masses in eastern Europe. This was particularly true of Russia and Rumania, where some four million Jews were threatened.

The Conference demands for the Jews of all countries the same elementary rights of tolerance, freedom of residence and trade, and equal citizenship that ought to be extended to all the inhabitants of every nation. But the Conference further expresses the hope that it may be practicable by agreement among all the nations to set free Palestine from the harsh and oppressive Government of the Turk in order that this country may form a free State under international guarantee, to which such of the Jewish people as desire to do so may return and may work out their own salvation free from interference by those of alien race or religion.¹³

These lines provided the first public indication of Labour's perception of the Jewish question, and a strong inference that its authors, without using the word Zionism, were aware of that movement's aspirations. No one seems to be able to say with certainty how these clauses evolved or how they found their way into the

Memorandum. What is known is that the prime authors were Arthur Henderson and Sidney Webb.¹⁴ Professor Gorny credited the clause's existence to a combination of factors including a capable information campaign aimed at the British Labour movement by the English branch of Poale Zion, a growth in support for Zionism by some large labour unions, effective lobbying by a Manchester Zionist faction associated with Chaim Weizmann,¹⁵ a pro-Zionist climate in articles and editorials in the leftist press, and the personal opinions of the document's authors.

Arthur Henderson had been a member of Lloyd George's War Cabinet from the end of 1916 until July 1917, a period which witnessed significant negotiations between Zionists and the Government. It would seem that Henderson came away from those negotiations permanently, if moderately, well-disposed towards Zionist aspirations. Sidney Webb must have felt the wording compatible with his notion of justice for the Jews, whether they chose to stay in Europe or 'return' to Palestine.

Labour's call for civic equality did not mark any departure from the views of most European liberals or socialists or even from those of many Jews who envisioned for themselves only a European future. Just prior to the issue of the Memorandum, Poale Zion had pressed the Labour Party for a declaration in favour of "national autonomy [in Europe] rather than to mere civic equality."¹⁶ That request was not reflected in the document because its authors did not perceive Jews as anything more than a religious community. This view fitted in with an existing consensus among European socialists that Jews, whatever else they might be, were not a nation. For that very reason Poale Zion had been denied membership in the pre-war Second Socialist International. Most socialists saw Zionism as bourgeois rather than proletarian in origin, ethnocentric rather than internationalist, reactionary as opposed to progressive and diverting as well as divisive of Jewish energies. Socialists preferred to see Jewish efforts channelled into the service of European reform and

revolution whose successes would resolve the Jewish question by creating societies which would accommodate substantial cultural (national?) differences.

In calling for a free State wherein Jews would, in effect, enjoy self-determination, it would seem the authors were ignorant of the existing Arab (Muslim and Christian)-Jewish population ratios or, if they knew, chose to treat them as of little consequence. The expressions 'right to return', 'salvation' and 'freedom from interference' would seem to accord to Jews considerable latitude in re-building and maintaining a national identity. But the authors stopped short. No national autonomy for Jews in Europe; no 'national' home in Palestine -- civic equality was perceived as inconsistent with national autonomy, and all explicit formulations denoting nationhood were deliberately avoided. Historical connection did not confer legal title. Parts of the British Labour movement and some elements within the British Labour Party would never be willing to travel much beyond that position.

In December 1917 the Memorandum with its 'Jewish' clause was accepted at a Special Conference of the Labour Party and the T.U.C. In February 1918 the Memorandum was approved as the peace aims of the Socialist Parties of Allied Countries. In April 1919, the Jewish question was discussed at the Amsterdam Conference of Socialist Parties. The British Labour Party delegation supported Poale Zion resolutions calling for full civic equality, freedom of immigration and colonization in every country, national autonomy on the personal principle (e.g., freedom of cultural identity) and national rights for Jews in the state, province or commune in countries where there is a compact and numerous population. They also called for:

(d) Recognition of the right of the Jewish people to create a national centre in Palestine under conditions determined by the League of Nations who will be responsible for the protection of the interests of the other inhabitants of the country.

(e) The representation of the Jewish people in the League of Nations.¹⁷

Between April 19 - 26, 1920, the allied powers met in conference at San Remo to discuss various territorial problems as well as to assign Class A Mandates in the Middle East.¹⁸ Representatives of British Labour sent a joint cable to Prime Minister Lloyd George telling him of resolutions on Palestine adopted at full meetings of the Parliamentary Labour Party, the Executive Committee of the Labour Party and the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress. They reminded the Prime Minister of the British government's declaration of November 2, 1917, and its promise "to facilitate the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine, a declaration . . . cordially welcomed by all sections of the British people and . . . re-affirmed by Earl Curzon on November 2, 1919."¹⁹ The cable urged:

. . . the necessity of redeeming this pledge by the acceptance of a mandate under the League of Nations for the administration of Palestine, with a view to its being reconstituted the [emphasis added] National Home of the Jewish People.²⁰

The cable was signed by key figures from the Labour Party Executive, the Parliamentary Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress.²¹ The word 'reconstituted' and the use of the definite article 'the' appeared to enhance the notion of Jewish rights beyond the formulation of the Balfour Declaration.

The period from General Allenby's entry into Jerusalem (December 1917) until Britain's assumption of the Mandate (April 1920) was marked by a growing Arab resistance in Palestine to the intent, as they understood it, of the Balfour Declaration. In April 1918 a small Zionist Commission led by Chaim Weizmann arrived in Palestine charged with forming a liaison with the British administration (known as O.E.T.A. which stood for Occupied Enemy Territory Administration), assisting the Jewish community and establishing friendly relations with the Arabs. The latter were not inclined to accept the Commission's explanation as to the meaning of Zionism; they preferred to plump for remaining a part of Syria in the expectation that an independent Syrian political entity was in the offing. Thus the British found

themselves early on caught between the two communities. The Zionists pressed for the right to bring in more immigrants and purchase more land. The Arabs (Muslim and Christian) petitioned and demonstrated against the proposed National Home. In the face of these pressures the O.E.T.A. opted for the status quo which infuriated the Zionists who brought pressure to bear in London for wholesale changes in the O.E.T.A. or its replacement by a more responsive regime. And beneath these political currents lay the ever present threat that the discord would become the politics of violence.

In February 27, 1920, anti-Zionist demonstrations began in Jerusalem; on March 8 during the Nebi Musa festivities they became more intense, and in early April, Arab opposition to the coming British mandate ended in public disturbances which were to no avail. On April 25, 1920, the San Remo conference assigned the Mandate for Palestine-Transjordan to Great Britain.

In June 1920, the British Labour Party meeting in Annual Conference at Scarborough passed its first ever resolution on Palestine. The text was sympathetic to Zionist calls for more Jewish immigration.

That this conference, in view of the fact that the Supreme Council at San Remo has incorporated in the Peace Treaty Palestine as a National Home for the Jewish People under the mandate of Great Britain, and that the present military administration is going to be replaced by a civil administration, requests the government to remove the restrictions placed upon the immigration of the Jews, and to allow immediate entry to the large number of suffering Jews in Eastern Europe anxiously waiting to be settled in Palestine. ²²

In March 1921, the new Colonial Secretary, Winston Churchill convened a conference of ranking British officials in the Middle East. The meeting, held in Cairo, advised Churchill to build a regional policy which offered some role to the Hashemites whose friendship could still prove useful notwithstanding the visible decline of the family's fortunes. (In July of 1920, French troops had occupied

Damascus and ousted the Hashemite King, Feisal I, from the throne of the Arab Kingdom of Syria.) The Cairo Conference urged that he be compensated by installation as King in Iraq. In February 1921, Feisal's older brother Abdullah, seemingly bent on challenging the French in Syria moved into Transjordan with some 2,000 Bedouin fighters. Churchill, who came to Palestine in late March, met with Abdullah in Jerusalem on March 27. He envisioned a French victory over Abdullah and a subsequent French presence east of the Jordan River. Unwilling to expel Abdullah by military means, Churchill sought a 'temporary' accommodation. In exchange for abstaining from a move into Syria for an assault on the French, Abdullah was encouraged to administer Transjordan in the name of the Mandatory and with a subsidy of L5,000 per month for six months.

In early May, 1921, more serious anti-Jewish disturbances broke out in various parts of Palestine (47 Jews and 48 Arabs were killed while 146 Jews and 73 Arabs were injured). A growing Arab opposition was crystallizing, somewhat unevenly, around the issues of Jewish immigration and land purchase. The former received the most attention because it was more easily perceived as a threat to the Arab character of Palestine.

The fact of the disturbances was not reflected at the British Labour Party's Annual Conference (June 1921). Poale Zion, which, in 1920, had become a Labour Party affiliate, moved a resolution which took cognizance of Britain's assumption of the mandate "with the object of assuring the development of a Jewish autonomous Commonwealth . . . and the upbuilding of that country . . . not upon the foundations of capitalist exploitation, but in the interests of Labour."²³ As no discussion ensued over the term Commonwealth, it may be surmised that the resolution's authors either meant it to be construed as synonymous with National Home or they were employing it as a circumlocution for something more.

The resolution's prime mover and spokesman was Shlomo Kaplansky, one of the first ideologues of Poale Zion, sent specifically from headquarters in Vienna to work in London on the movement's behalf. He insisted that the Palestine issue linked Jewish workers in Britain and Palestine to Jewish workers and socialists everywhere in the world. He argued that because Palestine was a British Mandate, it devolved upon the British Labour Party to fulfill a unique international obligation -- that of watchdog -- to see that Palestine's national and social regeneration would be along socialist rather than colonialist lines. He particularly emphasized Labour Zionism's trust in British Labour, and expressed confidence that the day would not be far off when British "Labour would obtain its due share in the government."²⁴ He stressed the need for support from international labour and, above all, the help of British Labour, whose word was "rightly listened to with confidence in the Orient." Kaplansky's able presentation combined a number of themes. He joined the Party's humanitarian impulses to a unique historical opportunity -- a chance to resolve the long-standing and painful Jewish question in a socialist experiment, which by Labour Zionist definition, would be non-imperialist. The British Labour Party was being asked to help Labour Zionism build its new Jerusalem in advance of the one it aspired to build in Britain itself.

During the latter part of 1921, the League of Nations began discussing the ratification of the San Remo mandates. At the same time, the first High Commissioner, Sir Herbert Samuel,²⁵ appointed the Haycraft Commission, headed by the Chief Justice of Palestine, to examine the causes of the May 1921 riots. While awaiting the commission's report, Sir Herbert decreed a temporary suspension of Jewish immigration -- a step which would forever damage his credibility among many Zionists in Palestine because his act was seen as a concession to violence, a violation of the commitment to Jewish immigration and a dangerous precedent. The Haycraft

Commission found that a May Day clash between Jewish political groups had served as a spark igniting explosive material. Although Arabs were faulted for initiating the assaults on Jews, Haycraft asserted that the fundamental cause of the disturbances was Arab political and economic discontent with Zionist policy as derived from that movement's more extreme exponents (e.g., those who spoke openly and confidently of the inevitability of a Jewish State). The report sent shock waves through the Yishuv (the Jewish community in Palestine) and the World Zionist Organization. It forcefully brought to their attention the existence and temper of the Arab population.

While the League was deliberating and Haycraft was enquiring, two centres of right-wing opposition to the Zionist enterprise were manifesting themselves in Great Britain -- one in the press, the other in Parliament. Much of the popular press, then controlled by Lords Northcliffe and Beaverbrook campaigned against the very idea as well as the program for a Jewish National Home. After making an eight month grand tour of the world between July 1921 and March 1922, Lord Northcliffe returned with strong doubts about the wisdom of British policy in Palestine.

Our politicians at home . . . were surrounded by propagandizing Jews in high places and were quite ignorant of the real feeling of our people on the Palestine question.²⁶

The two most common press arguments held that Zionism with its communal settlements, proletarian emphasis and Russian-Jewish leadership was synonymous with Bolshevism and that the British taxpayer should not have to pay out huge sums for ideological experiments which, in their estimation, did not serve British interests. Those arguments were also taken up and expanded upon by a number of Conservative parliamentarians, more so in the Lords than in the Commons.

The cumulative impact of the May riots, Haycraft's Report and criticism in the press and parliament prompted Churchill to issue an official clarification of Britain's commitment under the Palestine mandate. That authoritative interpretation took the

form of a White Paper (June, 1922), named after its author. It viewed the National Home as an autonomous national and spiritual centre, its autonomy construed as economic, social and cultural. It emphasized that Britain did not intend to hand over Palestine to the Jewish people. In order to allay Arab apprehensions about free Jewish immigration the principle of economic absorptive capacity was to be used to govern the rate of ingathering. Such capacity was to be based on Palestine's development creating the need for more labour. The Paper contained two other items of note: it stated the government's intention to establish a Legislative Council in order to associate the people of Palestine in its government, and it formalized the exclusion of Transjordan from the territorial sphere of the Jewish National Home. What had been an expedient in March 1921 had become policy in June 1922.

Churchill's political definition of the National Home occasioned little opposition; the absorptive capacity principle was so liberally applied that, in fact, after Samuel's temporary immigration suspension was lifted, no one was turned away. A Legislative Council, however, was a matter of real concern; by its very composition it was expected always to behave in ways inimical to Zionist interests. The separation of Transjordan was most discomfoting to these circles because its loss meant greater limitations on immigration and absorption. The Churchill White Paper took the position that the National Home should be developed gradually and with much caution. This view originated with Sir Herbert Samuel who visualized Palestine as a centre for a new, 'selected' Jewish community. It was not to be an instant repository for mass Jewish immigration -- and obviously not the all-embracing solution to the Jewish Question.

On June 22, 1922, political opposition led by die-hard Tories in the House of Lords put forward a resolution: "that the mandate for Palestine in its present form is unacceptable to this House" because it was opposed to the sentiments and wishes of

the great majority of the people of Palestine. The resolution was carried by a vote of 68 - 29. In the Commons a full dress debate followed, during which Mr. Morgan Jones, a designated spokesman for the Labour Party, argued:

. . . the return of the Jewish people to Palestine . . . is well grounded in history and tradition . . . on sentimental grounds, as well as on the grounds of good statesmanship, good policy and good politics, I entirely support the Mandate in Palestine.²⁷

A motion reaffirming the Balfour Declaration was carried. (Churchill had made it a vote of confidence.) Not one of the 39 'nays' came from the Labour benches.

Less than two years later (January 22, 1924), the British Labour Party was elected into office, albeit on a minority basis. The first opportunity for the new government to make a pronouncement on Palestine came in the House of Commons on February 25th. The new Colonial Secretary J.H. Thomas stated:

H.M. Government have decided after careful consideration of all circumstances to adhere to the policy of giving effect to the Balfour Declaration of 1917.²⁸

For the rest of the short life of this first Labour government, Palestine presented no serious difficulties.

The years from 1922 to 1929 were relatively tranquil for Palestine. Zionist fears about the creation of an Arab-dominated legislative council came to naught because Arab leaders would not participate for fear such action would help legitimize the Mandate. For the same reason they refused an offer to set up an Arab Agency analagous to the Jewish Agency for Palestine. In both instances Palestinian Arabs passed up opportunities to influence events in directions reflecting their own aspirations. Their all-or-nothing approach would be the dominant motif of their political activity for decades to come. During the same period, Zionist leaders had few misgivings about Mandatory policy. These were years when the benefits of British administration and Jewish sponsored development manifested themselves in a rising standard of living, albeit much more so for Jews than Arabs. Ironically, even

the recession of 1926-28 'helped' in a sense. Declining Jewish immigration and rising emigration tended to lessen Arab fears of being swamped by foreigners.²⁹ It did not, however, allay Arab apprehensions as to what the Zionist program might lead to in the future. During the twenties a growing number of Palestinian Arabs became increasingly conscious of the partial successes attained by neighbouring Arab peoples in their struggles for independence (e.g., Iraq and Egypt). That knowledge contributed to their own growing frustration, since they viewed the Jewish National Home, incubated and protected by Great Britain, as a violation of the intent of a Class A Mandate.

It would be fair to say that by 1929 a major part of the British Labour Party's leadership were pro-Zionist in the sense that they accepted the right of Jews to reconstruct in Palestine a 'national' community enjoying extensive economic, social and cultural autonomy. Undoubtedly, there were some pro-Zionist elements (e.g., Josiah Wedgewood, M.P.) who fully expected to see a Jewish 'national home' become a Jewish State.

The Party's 'collective position' on Zionism was formulated and continuously affected by a complex interplay of organizational, politico-ideological, cultural and personal factors. Zionist activists could be found within all the affiliates of the British Labour Party. Poale Zion tried to win Jewish votes for British Labour in the 1918 Khaki election by creating a Jewish National Labour Council whose ringing manifesto combined working class issues with Zionist aspirations.³⁰ The final segment of the Jewish Labour Manifesto included the 'Jewish' clause of the Memorandum on War Aims and followed it up by stating: "This ... rightly interpreted includes all Jewish demands and aspirations."³¹ British Poale Zion often took the lead in submitting pro-Zionist resolutions or resolutions of Zionist concern to the Annual Conferences of the British Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress.

Poale Zion was also represented on the Socialist Second International (reconstituted in the early twenties).

Poale Zion as part of the Histadrut (General Federation of Jewish Labour) exerted influence within Palestine's labour movement which in turn interacted with the British Labour Party in the International Federation of Trade Unions and British Commonwealth Labour Conferences. The representatives from Poale Zion and Histadrut developed good working relationships with their counterparts in the British Labour Party, and these were translated, over time, into both access and assistance. In 1929 the Histadrut, almost in the manner of a younger to an older brother, was able to get the T.U.C. to intervene with the Colonial Office over wage rates, working hours, and employment criteria for public works in Palestine (e.g., Haifa's harbour, railway shops and the Haifa-Kirkuk oil pipeline).

The British Labour Party bureaucracy was generally responsive to Zionist concerns. The key figure at headquarters was J.S. Middleton, a close friend of the Ramsay MacDonalds. He functioned as Assistant Party Secretary from 1900 to 1935 and Secretary from 1935 to 1944. In his foreward to The Jews and Palestine Middleton described himself as a "friend of Poale Zion, who has found many fine comrades among its leaders."³² Morgan Phillips, who replaced Middleton in 1944 was also considered 'friendly'. The third figure worth noting was William Gillies who became the first Overseas Secretary of the Labour Party. That position put him in charge of all correspondence with foreign labour parties, including Palestine. He too was considered to be 'on side'.

The Fabians, who had only a small membership, produced one very effective Zionist partisan in the person of Susan Lawrence, a contemporary of Henderson and MacDonald.³³ She held a seat on the party's highest body, the National Executive Committee. The attitudes of some of the other Fabians are worth a passing

comment. George Bernard Shaw did not think much of Zionism and what he had seen in Palestine during a visit in 1925 did not impress him. Beatrice Webb showed relatively little interest, and there is some evidence to indicate that she evinced some anti-Jewish feelings. Her husband, Sydney (Lord Passfield), was well disposed until the 1929 riots.

Zionism enjoyed the high regard of the MacDonalds, Ramsay and son Malcolm. In January 1922 Ramsay MacDonald visited Palestine, toured collective settlements and met Jewish labour leaders. He came back most enthused and wrote a series of articles for American Zionist publications.³⁴ His son who shared his father's enthusiasm was seen by Zionist activists in England as 'shelanu' (one of us).

Not to be overlooked was the ideological component. In 1919 Poale Zion in Palestine formed the nucleus of a new labour party, Ahdut Ha'avodah (Unity of Labour), and a year later combined with other labour groups to create the Histadrut which carved out for itself a dominant role in the economic, social and political life of the Yishuv. Such trade union power could not but be admired by the T.U.C. wing of the British Labour Party. For those who were attracted to the idea of democratic and egalitarian communalism, there were the kibbutzim (collective farms) and moshavim (cooperative farms). For those committed to the cooperative movements, the producer and consumer cooperatives were a source of inspiration. The Histadrut's coordination of health, education and other social services was envied by those who wanted British governments to play a larger role in these self-same areas. Humanitarians were encouraged by any evidence of improvements in the quality of Arab life --particularly when it could be shown as an outcome of the Zionist experiment (e.g., reduction in infant mortality, eradication of malaria).

And yet there were always some in the British Party who had misgivings, particularly after outbreaks of strife in Palestine. Overall, the tendency of the party was to discount the validity of the nationalist element in Arab protest by attributing

their behaviour to religious incitement and feudal leadership. There was a willingness to believe that a prospering Arab community would some day come to appreciate the economic benefits accruing to them from the Jewish National Home. There was also a general expectation that Arabs and Jews would eventually work out a harmonious relationship.

This view was not so evident in the left-wing press. As early as October 2, 1919 the New Statesman, generally considered to have been the most friendly to Zionism, pointed out that the existence and feelings of the non-Jewish population had to be taken into account.

In 1920, an unsigned article titled "Problems of Zionism" pointed to

the awkward fact . . . that the majority of the inhabitants have shown a profound antagonism to the regime proposed for their country.

The same article went further and asserted that

It may be legitimate for the British people to make a Home for the Jews in Palestine, but it would be a monstrous injustice to set up a complete Jewish state without regard to the feelings or rights of the vast majority of the inhabitants of the country.³⁵

Subsequent articles spoke of conflicting British promises; one in particular warned against an attempt to allow a Jewish majority to form. A New Statesman editorial in 1921 called for the creation of a bi-national state in Palestine. By July 1922 there was an even stronger cautionary note.

We need not disguise from ourselves the fact that it [Palestine] is a dangerous as well as an interesting experiment. It is based on a pledge . . . rather hastily given . . . the pledge was one of a series in which we entangled ourselves in the Middle East.

At the same time, it was accompanied by a guarded optimism.

There is the possibility, if the two peoples can be brought together, of a blending of Eastern and Western cultures, of the development of new forms in social and political organization

A second Labour Government took office on May 30, 1929. At the Annual Party Conference at the end of September, the Foreign Secretary Arthur Henderson reaffirmed both the Party's and the Government's position on Palestine.

There is no question of altering the position of this country in regard to the Mandate or the policy laid down in the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and embodied in the Mandate, of supporting in Palestine a National Home for the Jews.³⁷

Notes

1. Dr. Theodore Herzl (1860 - 1904) was born in Hungary and raised in the tradition of the German-Jewish enlightenment. He earned a law degree in 1884, but preferred to embark on a literary career. Although regarded as highly assimilated, Herzl was very aware of and sensitive to anti-Semitism in his day.
2. The term Zionism was coined by Dr. Nathan Birnbaum circa 1890 to designate the movement which aimed at returning the Jewish people to Eretz - Israel, a geographic designation for the area once inhabited by the Biblical tribes of Israel and very approximately rendered by the designation Palestine. The movement had its roots in a complex weave of Jewish history, religion, tradition and popular sentiment. Jewish life in the Diaspora (Dispersion) was marked by a strong sentiment for return and renewal, a challenge taken up by some individuals and groups over the entire period of the Second Exile (approximately 70 to 1948 A.D.). What Zionists have meant by Zionism has varied considerably. For some it was enough if a portion of the Jewish people were able to recreate their peoplehood 'somewhere' on the face of the globe (the territorialist solution); for others that territory could only be Palestine. Some Zionists defined peoplehood in cultural terms alone (religious or secular or both) with some degree of autonomy. Others insisted that the only acceptable political status would be sovereignty -- full statehood. Zionists came from all parts of the politico-religious spectrum as well, although by the mid-thirties, the lay Zionist institutions in Palestine and abroad were in the hands of adherents of Labour Zionism.
3. Arthur Hertzberg, The Zionist Idea (New York: Atheneum Press, 1971), p. 209.
4. Hoveve Zion movement came into being in Russia in 1882 as a response to the pogroms of 1881. Its purpose was to encourage Jewish settlement in Palestine as a means of achieving a Jewish national revival.
5. Walter Laqueur, A History of Zionism (New York: Holt Rinehart, 1972), p. 106.
6. Schneier Levenberg, The Jews and Palestine: A Study in Labour Zionism (London: Narod Press, 1945), p. 111.
7. Ramsay MacDonald (1866 - 1937) had a long and varied career as a politician and statesman. Self-taught, he was active in a number of left-wing groups (e.g. the Social Democratic Federation in 1885, the Fabian Society in 1886 and the Independent Labour Party in 1894. He served in Parliament for most of his life between 1901 and 1935. He was leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party from 1911 to 1914 and from 1922 to 1931. He was Prime Minister in 1924 and from 1929 to 1935. He led a rump of the Labour Party (National Labour) after 1931.
8. Arthur Henderson (1863 - 1935) was first elected to Parliament in 1903 as a trade unionist candidate. He was Chairman, Parliamentary Labour Party 1908 - 1910 and 1914 - 1917; Home Secretary, first Labour Government 1924; Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs 1929 - 1931; President, World Disarmament Conference 1932 - 1933.
9. The new constitution did much to enlarge the popular base of the party by provision for individual membership and the creation of local party associations. The combination created a political counterweight to the power wielded by the trade unions.

10. David Coates, The Labour Party and the Struggle for Socialism (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 12.
11. On the vast body of literature on the Balfour Declaration see Leonard Stein, The Balfour Declaration, Jon Kimche, The Unromatics, Christopher Sykes, Crossroads to Israel, and Barbara Tuchman, The Bible and the Sword.
12. Leonard Stein, The Balfour Declaration (London: Valentine-Mitchell, 1961), p. 548.
13. "Labour Peace Aims," The Times, August 11, 1917.
14. Sidney Webb (later Baron Passfield) was a lawyer, historian, social reformer and leading member of the Fabian Society. He and wife, Beatrice, developed a political partnership based on the idea that social progress could be led by a socially conscious elite. Among their many achievements were participation in the founding of the London School of Economics in 1895 and the New Statesman in 1913.
15. Chaim Weizmann (1874 - 1952) scientist, statesman, Zionist leader and first president of the State of Israel. Active in Zionist affairs, first in Russia, then in Berlin and finally after 1904 in England. Before the Great War he was a member of a Manchester Zionist circle. During the war he actively lobbied British political circles for support in carrying out the Zionist program. He was so sure the the western allies would win the war that he severed his contact with the World Zionist Organization then headquartered in Berlin. In 1918, Weizmann headed the Zionist Commission to Palestine. He held the presidency of the World Zionist Organization from 1920 to 1931 and 1935 to 1946, and the presidency of the Jewish Agency from 1929 on.
16. Joseph Gorny, The British Labour Movement and Zionism: 1917 - 1948 (London: Frank Cass, 1983), p. 9.
17. Levenberg, p. 116.
18. Former territories of the defeated Central Powers were parcelled out among some of the victors in the form of a special trust called a mandate. States receiving mandates, which came in one of three categories, A, B or C, were expected to prepare the mandated peoples for eventual independence. The French mandates in Syria and the Lebanon as well as Britain's in Iraq and Palestine were of the A category, meaning they would be the first peoples to achieve sovereign status. All the mandates were ratified by the League of Nations and the Mandatory powers were expected to answer for their trust to that organization.
19. Dov Hoz Memorandum "A Labour Policy for Palestine" December 20, 1935, p.3. LP/IMPAC/3/181 LA.
20. Ibid.
21. J.R. Clynes, Acting Chairman, Parliamentary Labour Party; H.S. Lindsay, Secretary, Parliamentary Labour Party; W.H. Hutchison, Chairman, Labour Party Executive; Arthur Henderson, Secretary, Labour Party Executive; J.H. Thomas, Chairman, Trades Union Congress and C.W. Bowerman, Secretary of the T.U.C.

22. Ibid., p. 4.
23. Ibid.
24. The Labour Party Conference Report. June 1921, p. 198.
25. Sir Herbert Louis Samuel (1870 - 1963) was born into a distinguished Anglo-Jewish family. In the course of his political career, he became the first member of the Jewish community ever to sit in a British Cabinet. After Ottoman Turkey came into the Great War, Samuel became more enthusiastic about the possibilities of the Zionist Program. Although out of office after December 1916 (with the fall of the Asquith Government), he played an active role in events leading up to the Balfour Declaration. In April 1920 Lloyd George offered Samuel the post of first High Commissioner to Palestine. He served from July 1920 to August 1925.
26. Tom Clarke, Northcliffe in History: An Intimate Study of Press Power (London: Hutchinson, 1950), p. 155.
27. Dov Hoz Memorandum "A Labour Policy for Palestine" December 20, 1935, p.5. LP/IMPAC/3/181 LA.
28. Ibid., p. 6.
29. The average number of Jewish immigrants per year between 1920 and 1923 was 8,000. In 1924 it grew to approximately 13,000, increased dramatically to 33,000 in 1925, fell back to 13,000 in 1926 and plunged to 3,000 per year for 1927 and 1928.
30. Levenberg, p. 205.
31. Ibid., p. 206.
32. Ibid., p. 5.
33. Susan Lawrence (1871 - 1947) was active in the Fabian Society and the women's section of the party. She also served as chairman of the National Executive Committee 1929 - 30 and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health (June 29 - August 31) in the second Labour government.
34. MacDonald's articles appeared in New Palestine, the organ of the Zionist Organization of America ("The Great Return: The Alluring Call of Palestine" May 5, 1922; "A Pilgrim's Impression of Palestine", June 23, 1922; "The Great Jewish Return", January 24, 1924). He was full of admiration for the work of Zionist pioneers, praised the Jewish labour movement for trying to improve living standards for all. He took the position that Arab-Jewish strife was mostly a result of propoganda by a conservative Arab leadership.
35. The New Statesman, Dec. 25, 1920, p. 356.
36. Ibid., July 8, 1922, p. 376.
37. Dov Hoz Memorandum "A Labour Policy for Palestine" December 20, 1935, p.6. LP/IMPAC/3/181 LA.

Chapter 2

First Political Crisis (1929 - 1931)

On August 23, 1929, an incident originating at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem quickly escalated into a general assault by Arabs against Jews.¹ Within days such attacks spread to all parts of Palestine and included the sacking of a village (Huldah) and the massacre of a pious community (Hebron). After some delay, the Mandatory administration brought in troops from Egypt and restored order. On September 2, 1929, Poale Zion addressed an urgent memorandum to the British Labour Party's Executive Committee via that party's International Department. The memo argued that the Arab instigators aimed to:

. . . intimidate the Jews and destroy the growing understanding which eight years of uninterrupted peace and prosperity and increasing cooperation were bringing . . . and to bring pressure to bear on the Labour government to reverse a policy which was likely to come to fruition under the regime . . . and to restore the influence of the Husseini dynasty.²

The memo castigated the Palestine administration for not responding adequately to the situation before it became one of open conflict. It went on to assert that the real root of the evil lay in the

. . . wide gulf [which] exists between the declared intention of the Mandatory Government in London and the attitude of the Administration on the spot, whilst many influential officials in Palestine are indifferent, or even hostile to the object and intentions of the Mandate. They have been more concerned with placating the enemies of the Mandate than in encouraging the resettlement of the Jews.³

Poale Zion called for a change of spirit and heart by appropriate changes in the administration; it also called for more opportunity for Jews to serve in both the Palestine Police and the Frontier Defence Corps. It asked the Labour government "to reiterate its determination to continue its trusteeship for the League of Nations and

to discharge this international obligation to the Jewish people and Palestine."⁴ It also requested an enquiry into the circumstances which led to the outbreak, and a probe of their causes. On September 3 it was followed by a short, blunt telegram from the Labour Federation of Palestine calling for the removal of inept administration officials, greater provision for Jewish self-defence, reparations, prosecution of the guilty parties and the setting up of an enquiry commission. The Zionists got their commission, a four man, all-party body headed by Sir Walter Shaw.⁵ It was charged with examining the immediate causes of the recent outbreak, and was requested to make recommendations as to measures necessary to avoid a recurrence. While the Commission went about its business, Lord Passfield, the Colonial Secretary, studiously refrained from public discussion about the causes of the disturbances or the implications they might have for future policy.

In a private communication⁶ the Colonial Secretary indicated that he had had the Shaw Commission composed in such a way that it "would give no encouragement to the idea that there could be any reconsideration of the acceptance by His Majesty's Government of the Mandate for Palestine or any weakening of policy with regard to the Jewish National Home in accordance with the Mandate."⁷ By late December of 1929 there was growing anxiety in Zionist circles that the Shaw Commission was exceeding its terms of reference by accepting testimonies which brought the National Home itself into question. Chaim Weizmann, then head of the World Zionist Organization, tried to get the Foreign Secretary, Arthur Henderson, to intervene by indicating to Cabinet that the Shaw Commission was indeed exceeding its terms of reference. Weizmann was rebuffed. Henderson refused to become involved in a matter which was then exclusive to the Colonial Office. He did, however, promise to speak up on behalf of the Jewish National Home when the Shaw Report came before Cabinet.

The Shaw Commission's findings were published on March 30, 1930. The Report lacked unanimity; Labour M.P. Harry Snell did not accept the majority's interpretation as to the reasons for the disturbances. The other Commissioners, while admitting that extremist Arab leaders had incited their own community to violence, held that the real causes lay in Jewish immigration and land acquisition. The Report asserted that land purchases were responsible for creating a class of landless Arab cultivators, while the Yishuv's development was slowly but surely stifling Arab hopes for self-determination. The Shaw Commission's recommendations included: a call for Britain to re-define its Palestine policy with greater emphasis on safeguarding the interests of non-Jewish communities; a revision of immigration policy to preclude mass immigration on the scale of the mid 20's, provision for consultation on immigration with non-Jewish elements, an enquiry into the possibilities of upgrading Arab agriculture and a land policy in line with all of the above. The Report urged His Majesty's government to remind Zionists that they, meaning the Jewish Agency, were not part of government in Palestine.

Upon receipt of the Shaw Report, the British government dispatched a technical commission to investigate the land question and make specific proposals with respect to agricultural development, immigration and settlement. The enquiry was conducted by an expert on rural settlement, Sir John Hope-Simpson.⁸ His investigation was built upon the Shaw Commission's conclusions. While awaiting Hope-Simpson's recommendations, the government repeated the tactic utilized by Sir Herbert Samuel after the 1921 disturbances; it suspended that class of Jewish immigration which was totally reliant on entry certificates issued on the basis of the 1922 White Paper's economic absorption principle. (The quota did not apply to individuals who possessed a minimum amount of private capital.) The double blow of Shaw's findings and the immigration suspension caused considerable consternation among Zionists. In

Palestine, the Jewish community's response took the form of demonstrations and strikes.

In 1930, the Labour Party's Annual Conference held at Llandudno in October welcomed a statement by the Government's representative to the League of Nations Mandates Commission to the effect that the Jewish National Home could be established without detriment to non-Jewish interests. The Conference also accepted a resolution which called for "a reaffirmation of Labour Party policy toward the Jewish National Home in Palestine as declared in consecutive pronouncements and resolutions."⁹

Hope-Simpson's Report, released to the public on October 21, 1930, focused on the condition of Arab agriculture. It analyzed the difficulties as shortages of land, capital, and modern farming techniques alongside increasing rents and taxes. It saw Arab cultivators as vulnerable to eviction as a consequence of Jewish land purchases from absentee Arab landowners and Arab middlemen, and to unemployment as a consequence of the application of the principle of exclusive Hebrew labour. The kibbutzim and moshavim, built on land purchased by the Jewish National Fund, did not have Arab members, and were opposed, on principle, to using hired labour. The principle of Hebrew labour was strongly enforced in Zionist industrial enterprises. The intention was to create a Jewish proletariat by enlarging the absorptive capacity of the Jewish sector of the economy while maintaining a higher wage-rate structure than would have been possible if unorganized Arab labour were employed. The Report presented inordinately pessimistic projections in respect of cultivatable land, Arab landlessness and industrial possibilities.¹⁰ The Report called for a cessation of Jewish immigration and land acquisition until the Arab population had experienced considerably more educational, technological and social progress. After that, Hope-Simpson posited, the increased availability of arable land would permit a small resumption of Jewish immigration and settlement.

The Colonial Secretary (Lord Passfield), issued a White Paper on the same day as the Report was made public. It accepted much of Hope-Simpson's thinking and was most disturbing to Zionists of every stripe. It began by denying the major Zionist premise that building up the National Home was the dominant feature of Britain's undertaking under the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate, and embraced, instead, the notion of equal obligation. It struck body blows at the Zionist enterprise when it attacked the principle of Hebrew labour and when it recommended enhanced government regulation of land transfer and immigration tied to a re-definition of absorptive capacity. The 1922 (Churchill) White Paper had viewed absorptive capacity essentially in terms of the growth which would be generated by the more energetic of the two (Arab and Jewish) economic sectors. Hope-Simpson re-defined that capacity by treating the economy as a unified entity. In practice, this meant that Arab unemployment could be used to justify a reduction in Jewish immigration. Zionist leadership perceived these recommendations as a betrayal whose implementation would seriously impair the growth of their National Home. Weizmann's response took the form of a highly critical letter to Lord Passfield on October 20.

The Statement of His Majesty's Government purports to reiterate the policy contained in the White Paper of 1922 and to follow Sir John Hope-Simpson's Report . . . It goes a long way towards denying the rights and sterilizing the hopes of the Jewish people in regard to the National Home in Palestine, so far as it is in the power of His Majesty's Government to do so.¹¹

Weizmann reminded Passfield that the last meeting of the Council of the League of Nations had warned Britain in advance against embracing any policy which "aimed at crystallizing [freezing] the development of the Jewish National Home at the present stage of development." His letter closed on a very poignant note.

During the last twelve years I have been at the head of the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency. All that time I have sought to work in the closest harmony with His Majesty's

Government and to base my actions on a system of intimate cooperation with them; nobody could therefore be more anxious than myself to respond to an appeal for further cooperation were there a basis for it [emphasis added]. But I fail to see it now, after a censure has been pronounced by His Majesty's Government on our past work, and decisions are being taken placing most serious obstacles to it in the future. In these circumstances I have decided to resign my office as President of the Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency.

Passfield's reply came on October 25, 1930. He regretted Weizmann's resignation and "imperfect appreciation of the Government's attitude and intentions." He reiterated his own admiration for work done in building up the National Home, and pointed out that the White Paper had criticized specific Zionist practices, but was not a total censure; he refuted Weizmann's central charge that the new policy would freeze further development. Passfield insisted that the White Paper had taken cognizance of Weizmann's views:

His Majesty's Government have not acted without consulting you in advance. Your representations, including those made verbally to myself, were duly considered by them, and, so far as they related to the Statement of Policy, have led to certain changes in the document. So far as they related to the scheme of development and other matters, they will be carefully borne in mind, though I cannot, of course, give any assurance that His Majesty's Government will find it possible to give effect to them.¹²

In his reply of October 29, 1930, Weizman countered by presenting a much more detailed and precise analysis of the White Paper's meaning with special attention to the matters of immigration and land acquisition. Weizmann charged that in contrast with the principle laid down in the White Paper of 1922, Jewish immigration was to be restricted "not when it might cause unemployment, but whenever there is unemployment among the Arabs."¹³ Weizmann pointed out that Jewish capital was imported into Palestine "primarily to give employment to Jewish immigrants; it will not come to provide it for unemployed Arabs." In this matter he invoked Hope-Simpson who wrote that it was no advantage to the unemployed Arab should Jewish

capital be prevented from entering the country. "In fact he is better off, as the expenditure of that capital on wages to Jewish workers will cause, ultimately a demand for the services of a portion of the Arab unemployed."¹⁴ Weizmann emphasized Hope-Simpson's warning that the possibility of Arab unemployed could be used as a 'political pawn'. His strongest criticism was directed at that portion of the White Paper which held that:

... so long as widespread suspicion exists, and it does exist, amongst the Arab population, that the economic depression, under which they undoubtedly suffer at present, is largely due to excessive Jewish immigration, and so long as some grounds exist upon which this suspicion may be plausibly represented to be well founded, there can be little hope of any improvement in the mutual relations of the two races.¹⁵

Weizmann was not prepared to cede Jewish immigration rights to Arab beliefs 'plausibly represented'. He faulted Passfield for ignoring all other elements in Hope-Simpson's analysis of Arab unemployment, including the world decline in prices for agricultural produce, and the impact of an ongoing Arab economic boycott in Palestine and among neighboring Arab countries. Weizmann also took issue with Passfield's acceptance of Hope-Simpson's estimates on the extent of cultivable land. The Palestine administration defined such land as "that [which] could be brought under cultivation by the application of the labour and financial resources of the average [emphasis added] Palestinian cultivator."¹⁶ The Jewish Agency found such a definition unacceptable. It viewed cultivable land as any land capable of being farmed regardless of the financial input necessary for agricultural preparation. Weizmann also pointed out that Article 6 of the Mandate gave to Jews, subject to certain conditions, a right to close settlement on state and wastelands not required for public purposes. Hope-Simpson had chosen not to publish the statistics for 1929 - 30 which showed that over 70 percent of all state land had been allotted or leased to Arab cultivators. This would have bolstered the Jewish Agency's contention that the

Mandatory was not actively facilitating Jewish settlement on both state and wastelands. In respect of such lands the White Paper had said:

Even were the title of the Government to these areas admitted, and it is in many cases disputed, it would not be possible to make these areas available for Jewish settlement, in view of their actual occupation by Arab cultivators and of the importance of making available additional land on which to place the Arab cultivators who are now landless. [emphasised by Weizmann]¹⁷

Weizmann was most perturbed by the principle implied in the clause that "every landless Arab cultivator, even though he never possessed or even lost land as a result of Jewish settlement, has a right to be settled on the land as a farmer before Jews may acquire land for close settlement."¹⁸ Weizmann ended his letter by refuting Passfield's assertion about prior consultation by pointing out that he had never been privy to the document's actual contents and was not therefore enabled to make specific representations. In closing, Weizmann reiterated his inability to see any hope at all in the new policy.

I have read and reread the White Paper in search of an interpretation which could supply a basis for continuing that close cooperation with His Majesty's Government, for which I have stood during so many years. I have utterly failed to find it.

On October 28, 1930, Mapai (the Palestine Labour Party and successor to Ahdut Ha'avodah) meeting in extraordinary conference in Jerusalem, cabled the British Labour party:

Conference denounces this document as breach of faith under guise of loyalty to Mandate, recognition of National Home, solicitude of lot of fellaheen, and appeal to Jewish Arab understanding. White Paper virtually repudiates British pledges to Jewish people, defames Zionist achievement, misconstrues terms of Mandate, sets Arabs against Jews, delivers Palestine's destiny into hands of Council composed of colonial officials and a handful of rapacious effendis.¹⁹

This indictment then asked how it was that a Labour government "whose heads have seen our work and paid tribute to high human social values inherent in Zionist achievements . . . due to Jewish Labour" could break an international pledge of such

import. How could the British government bring itself to rob the Jewish people of a right to a homeland, give aid and comfort to anti-semites of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion school?²⁰ How could it betray Jewish Labour? The cable reiterated the Jewish right of return and disputed assertions that building up the National Home dispossessed and impoverished any significant section of the Arab community.

The Government's statement, by its travesty of truth and unwarranted slurs, is a dark stain upon the record of the Labour Movement. Jewish workers urge their British Labour comrades to wipe off this blot and fulfill honorably resolutions on Palestine adopted at their Conferences.

In addition, the cable's authors seized the opportunity to reaffirm opposition to the British intention of creating a Legislative Council in which Jews were expected to participate.

In view of your new policy, Jewish population unanimously rejects proposed participation in Legislative Council.

Leonard Stein, who would later author a seminal study of the Balfour Declaration, wrote:

If the Government's object was to antagonize even the most moderate and the most pro-British of Zionists, its purpose has been fully achieved. . . . For the first time the Jewish people finds itself face to face with a British Government which it does suspect of something going deeper than pre-occupation with more pressing concerns -- a Government which is not interested in the Jewish National Home, does not appreciate the significance of the Balfour Declaration, and has no intention of exerting itself to carry it into effect. . . . The White Paper may represent the considered opinion of the present Government; it is not for one moment to be believed that it represents the last word of the British people.²¹

As fate would have it, the White Paper even became a key issue in an East London by-election scheduled for the first week of December 1930. The borough of Whitechapel was one-third Jewish, and to some degree susceptible to influence by the Jewish Socialist Workers' Party. A fierce debate took place inside Poale Zion as to whether or not to support the Labour Party since it was associated with the government which produced the White Paper. The election campaign also featured a

contest between the Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald and Ernest Bevin of the Trade Union movement²² as to who would nominate the Party's candidate.²³ Ultimately, Poale Zion chose to back the Bevin-sponsored trade unionist candidate. In the process of coming to that decision, Poale Zion gave Bevin his first sustained acquaintance with Zionism and its concerns. Dov Hoz, a World Labour Zionist activist, sent out from Palestine in the late 20's specifically to work with British Poale Zion, was Bevin's key contact. The Labour Party nominee was Mr. James Hall, a member of the Executive of the Transport Workers' Union. On November 20, 1930, he wrote to Poale Zion's Central Committee and declared that after reading the White Paper and all policy statements from the Balfour Declaration on, he was bound to say that:

. . . there are certain inferences in the White Paper which I cannot reconcile with the declaration to which I refer [the last policy statement of the Labour Party]. . . . If any attempt is made by this government to depart from the spirit of the resolution of the Llandudno Conference which so clearly expressed the policy of our party I will regard it as my duty to my Jewish constituents to vote against any such action.²⁴

At a Poale Zion-sponsored public election meeting on November 28, partisans of the Liberal candidate, Barnett Janner, a pro-Zionist Jew, and some young 'Communists' sought to disrupt the meeting -- each group for its own purposes. They were generally successful until Bevin took over the chair and overrode them. In his speech he told the crowd that the Transport Workers had twenty-six members in the House of Commons, and that "if the White Paper comes up before the House they would all vote against it, as would Mr. Hall when he got there."²⁵

Labour won Whitechapel by a shade more than 1,000 votes -- a considerable reduction from its majority of 8,000 at the previous poll. Poale Zion was gratified. With Labour holding office as a minority government, Poale Zion had demonstrated, in a very practical way, that its commitment to the British Labour Party counted for something.

Voting against one's own government was one thing; bringing it down was another. Bevin indicated to Hoz before the election that he would press for a government freeze on the White Paper's implementation until the sticky issues were clarified. This was vetoed by Lord Passfield, who ended up accepting, instead, the creation of a cabinet committee to undertake a 'clarification'.²⁶ Under public pressure from Bevin, Passfield said that the government was not opposed to the principle of 'Hebrew labour' in the Jewish section of the economy. He also denied that immigration would cease. As proof of the latter he released 1,500 immigration certificates. Weizmann, among others, viewed this move as a sop.²⁷

Gradually, the perception of the 1930 White Paper as an act of unconscionable betrayal took hold among Zionists and their supporters, and they apportioned the blame accordingly between the Colonial Secretary, the Cabinet and Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald. The latter was, in one sense, in a more unenviable position than his Colonial Secretary. MacDonald had a long history of open, public support for the Jewish National Home and Labour-Zionist achievements. Under attack for his government's willingness to go the route mapped out by the White Paper and for the perceived variance between his previous utterances about the National Home and the Passfield document, MacDonald argued that in the long run the White Paper would prove advantageous; he felt that slowing down the upbuilding of the National Home would yield the time needed to allay Arab fears, and to improve their condition, thus creating a more secure base for future Arab-Jewish cooperation.

Zionist and pro-Zionist elements rejected this line of reasoning and continued to press for either a substantial redraft or revocation. In the face of mounting pressure from the party, and his own M.P.s, MacDonald thought it advisable to meet privately with Dr. Weizmann. On November 6, 1930 Ramsay MacDonald's thirty year old, politically involved son, Malcolm, mediated a private meeting between his father and Weizmann.²⁸

Ramsay MacDonald told Weizmann about his intention to establish a cabinet committee for clarification purposes; he promised that the committee would consult with the Jewish Agency for Palestine. At some time during the conversation Malcolm MacDonald asked his father whether the committee would be allowed to amend the White Paper. MacDonald replied: "There is no White Paper."²⁹ He explained that by the time the committee worked through the clarifying and amending process, the White paper would be a nullity. Two weeks later, MacDonald rose in the House, recalled his earlier trip to Palestine, commended Labour Zionism for its fine work and promised that the Government would live up to its obligations under the Mandate, without bothering to define those obligations. The cabinet clarification committee had as its chairman not, as one would have expected, Lord Passfield, but rather the Foreign Secretary, Arthur Henderson. The pointed sidelining of the Colonial Secretary in a matter so central to his portfolio offended Passfield, and he displayed, thereafter, a growing disenchantment with the Zionist cause. Both Henderson and the Zionists wanted a quick resolution; it came in the form of a letter drafted by Henderson, above MacDonald's signature. Dated February 13, 1931, the letter told Dr. Weizmann that the Churchill White Paper (1922) remained the basis for government policy. MacDonald also read the letter to the House of Commons.³⁰

Passfield's White Paper and MacDonald's letter may be viewed as polarities. The Passfield view, shared by a minority in Cabinet, House and Party, implied that the Jewish National Home was essentially completed by the decade's end, and consequently the Government's obligations were fulfilled. The riots of 1929 were interpreted as a strong signal from the Arab community that their sensitivities and national aspirations could no longer be safely ignored, thus the decision to accommodate them to a larger degree. MacDonald's letter reflected a different viewpoint. It promised future growth for the National Home but on a deliberately slowed and more

carefully crafted process of ingathering and upbuilding. Above all, MacDonald's outlook, shared by the majority, held that if the Zionist experiment could consciously pursue approaches which were capable of engendering Arab understanding and cooperation, then there was still room for an expansion of the Yishuv.

Notes

1. Between 1925 and 1929 Arab-Jewish antagonism displayed a number of foci, including a struggle over a Jewish presence at the remains of the retaining wall at Temple Mount (Haram es Sharif) in Jerusalem. Muslim elements were keen to reduce Jewish right of access to the area, even for religious purposes, as part of a desire to reduce Jewish/Zionist claims on Eretz - Israel. The British preferred to maintain the pattern of access established by the Ottoman Turks, minus the special tax which the Porte had exacted. Any move by Jews to change the status quo (e.g., the placement of tables and chairs in 1925 or the erection of a worship separation screen in 1928) were vigorously resisted as Jewish/Zionist encroachments on Arab rights. In 1929 additional rumors about Jewish designs on Muslim owned Temple Mount preceded the bloody riots which broke out in August.
2. Poale Zion Memorandum to the British Labour Party "On the Situation in Palestine". September 2, 1929, p.1. JSM/210/4 L.A.
3. Ibid., p.2.
4. Ibid., p. 4.
5. Sir Walter Shaw was a veteran official of the British Colonial Office. The other members represented the three major British political parties. They were: Sir Henry Betterton (Conservative), Hopkin Morris (Liberal) and Harry Snell (Labour). The Commission sat in Jerusalem as a public court of enquiry.
6. The private communication was a letter to Lord Melchett, a Conservative peer, who in 1928, had become president of the English Zionist Federation. In 1929 he became associate chairman of the Jewish Agency Council and chairman of its political committee. Letter cited in Gorny, p. 67.
7. Gorny, p. 59.
8. Sir John Hope-Simpson was a retired civil servant (India) and a member of the League of Nations Commission for the resettlement of Greek refugees. He spent slightly less than two months in Palestine (May 29 to July 24, 1930).
9. Dov Hoz Memorandum "A Labour Policy for Palestine" December 20, 1935, p.6. LP/IMPAC/3/181 LA.
10. The aerial survey component in Hope-Simpson's estimates of cultivable land was faulted by Zionist land experts as reflecting a condition after most crops had been harvested. They argued that this gave an unduly narrow picture of arability. In determining the matter of landlessness among rural Arabs, Hope-Simpson relied heavily on statistics gathered by William Johnson (Palestine Treasurer) and Robert Crosbie (Southern District Commissioner). Using a survey technique of doubtful validity, Johnson-Crosbie held that slightly more than one quarter of the surveyed group were labourers who did not own and occupy agricultural land. Accepting their work as valid, Hope-Simpson concluded without supporting evidence that these landless labourers were a result of Jewish land purchase activities.

11. Weizmann to Passfield, October 20, 1930. JSM/210/66 L.A.
12. Passfield to Weizmann, October 25, 1930. JSM/210/66 L.A.
13. Weizmann to Passfield, October 29, 1930. JSM/210/66 L.A.
14. Cmd. 3692. Palestine: Statement of Policy by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. October 1930. p. 22.
15. Weizmann to Passfield, October 29, 1930. JSM/210/66 L.A.
16. Kenneth W. Stein. The Land Question in Palestine, 1917 - 1939 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984) p. 105.
17. Weizmann to Passfield, October 29, 1930. JSM/210/66 L.A.
18. Ibid.
19. Palestine Labour Party Executive to British Labour Party, October 28, 1930, signed by David Ben Gurion. p. 1.
20. Protocols of the Elders of Zion was the title of an anti-semitic publication which purported to be evidence of a Jewish conspiracy to enslave the Gentile world. The bulk of the Protocols came from a plagiarized nineteenth century work attacking Liberalism. The Protocols' author substituted Jews for Liberals and with some creative embellishments produced a most enduring piece of anti-Semitism.
21. Leonard Stein in New Judea attached to letter from M.D. Eder, President of the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland to J.S. Middleton, November 2, 1930. JSM/210/531 L.A.
22. By 1930 Ernest Bevin (1881 - 1951) was the single most powerful trade union leader in Great Britain. He was General Secretary of the largest single labour group in the country, the Transport and General Workers Union as well as a member of the general council of the Trades Union Congress. Given that the T.U.C. was a significant element in the funding and support of the Labour Party, Bevin wielded considerable influence.
23. There were rumors that MacDonalld favoured Stafford Cripps, a junior member of the government. Poale Zion was not well disposed to backing candidates associated with the government which had produced the White Paper. In addition, he was a nephew of Beatrice Webb and thought by some to share his aunt's anti-Zionist attitudes.
24. Poale Zion Newsletter, December 1930. p. 11. L.A.
25. Ibid., p. 13.
26. Gorny, pp. 99-100.
27. The Times, Dec. 2, 1930.

28. Malcolm MacDonald, son of Ramsay, was a Labour MP between 1929 and 1931 and a National Labour MP from 1931 to 1935 and 1936 to 1945. In 1935 and 1938 to 1940, he was Secretary of State for the Colonies. At the time of this meeting between Weizmann and the MacDonalds, Malcolm was considered one of those Gentile Zionists who were heart and soul committed to Zionism. His actions as Colonial Secretary in 1938 - 40 left a very bitter feeling among those Zionists who counted him as one of their own. In an interview with the author at Balfour House, London, on July 17, 1984, J. Levenberg, past chairman of Poale Zion of Great Britain, and author of The Jews and Palestine (1945) was most emphatic about the 'turnabout' in Malcolm MacDonald's attitudes and actions.
29. Gorny, p. 100.
30. According to Gorny there is in the Mapai Party Archives a document classified 'Top Secret and not for publication' 101/31 Vol. 1 which indicates that MacDonald, who had intended to read the letter to Weizmann in parliament, had undergone a change of heart. Weizmann, it was reported, then spoke to him most forcefully [emphasis added] and MacDonald gave in and read the letter.

Chapter 3

Stability and Instability (1932 - 1936)

In mid-1931 the second Labour government split wide open over issues relating to domestic policy. MacDonald, abandoned by his own party and most of its parliamentary faction, put together a National Coalition government of Conservatives, Liberals and a minority of Labourites. On October 27, 1931, this National Coalition won a General Election by a very substantial majority.

In the wake of the MacDonald letter, the first half of the thirties witnessed a remarkable expansion in the size of the Yishuv. The Jewish population grew through mass immigration from some 180,000 to over 400,000. The greatest incentive to this influx was the deteriorating situation of Jews in Europe, particularly in Germany and Poland. The new arrivals included more people who possessed both capital and useful commercial and professional skills; they helped produce a 'boom' in the Palestine economy while much of the industrialized world was still in the grip of the Great Depression.

Once the MacDonald letter had established in Zionist eyes the status quo ante Passfield, the Zionists felt more positive towards the British Labour Party, and this was reciprocated. Pro-Zionist sentiments were also stimulated by the fact of Jewish suffering at the hands of Fascism and its obverse -- the triumph of Zionist pioneering. It should also be noted that whenever the Labour party was critical of government policy, which was, after all, the function of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition, it tended to draw closer to mainstream Zionism.

In the period from the MacDonald letter to the Arab Revolt of 1936, there were in Palestine relatively few violent manifestations of Arab discontent. This was due

to an improving economy and the actions of the British authorities, who were determined to avoid any repetition of the 1929 disturbances. The Mandatory Government wanted the Arab population to know that it was prepared to use immediate and sufficient force if confronted by acts of disorder. This 'quiet' did not mean that Arab nationalists had lost any of their passion or commitment. In fact, the opposite proved true. As more Palestinians were exposed to nationalist thought, the more they desired an independent Arab Palestine. Palestinian Arab leadership was highly concentrated in the hands of a few leading families, most notably the Husseinis and the Nashishibis. They were most vocal in condemning continued Jewish immigration and land purchase, although not above taking bribes from the Jewish Agency and selling land to Jews when the circumstances were appropriate.¹ They also endeavoured to acquaint Arabs in neighbouring states with the Palestine situation in the hopes of arousing their sympathy and enlisting support.

The one issue which continued to arouse Zionist concern in the thirties revolved around the British Mandatory's expressed intention to establish a Legislative Council in Palestine. There had been an Advisory Council during the first year of the Mandate, but it had dissolved in 1921. The attempt to establish a Legislative Council in 1922 had come to naught. The Arab leadership boycotted the election to the Council. For its part, the Jewish Agency for Palestine had been opposed because they feared the consequences of a Legislative Council dominated by hostile Arabs in alliance with unfriendly Mandatory appointees. However, the idea of involving Jews and Arabs in the governing of Palestine, albeit in a limited way, had not disappeared. The 1930 Passfield White Paper indicated an intention to revive the Legislative Council along the lines of the scheme shelved in 1923.² There were people in both the Mandatory administration and the British Parliament who conceived of a Legislative Council as possibly the best way of inducing Jewish-Arab political

cooperation. There was also a view which held that Arab participation, particularly on a proportional basis, would help defuse Arab frustration and anger by giving them some power to control developments.

In a lengthy memorandum for the British Labour Party, the Jewish Agency argued against the establishment of a Legislative Council. They held that although the Peace Treaties and the League of Nations imposed new forms of legal obligation on succession states and Mandatory powers, the former in respect of minorities, the latter in respect of protection for native populations, the Mandate for Palestine was unique because its 'raison d'etre' was the establishment of a Jewish National Home.

. . . the special task is imposed upon the Mandatory Power of creating in the territory under its charge, the framework of a new society for a national group which is so far represented in the country by only a fraction of its members, but which has been admitted by international agreement to possess a rightful claim to national re-establishment in Palestine.³

The memo asserted that the obligation to develop self-governing institutions should always be read in the light of the aforementioned commitment and that political structures should be designed to further, or at the very least, not to impede, that undertaking. The Agency asserted that:

The setting up of a Legislative Council in Palestine under present numerical conditions, cannot but react detrimentally upon the evolution of the Jewish National Home. Its very establishment would involve a reduction of Jewish status in Palestine . . . if this [special status] is destroyed, if Jews are made to feel that in Palestine, too, they have but the status of a minority, then the specific object which inspired the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate . . . will have been defeated.

In addition, the memo argued that despite a government promise to introduce safeguards such as limiting the composition and powers of the projected Council it would not in actual practice work because Arab members, should they even agree to sit on such a body, would invariably take an obstructionist position as a matter of

course. It was also posited that rivalry amongst Arab leaders would have them competing with one another in the taking of extremist positions. Drawing on situations in other parts of the globe, the Agency held that:

In the nationalist atmosphere which at present pervades the greater part of the world, the concession of any measure of representative government inevitably acts as a spur to the demand for complete self-government.

Using Ceylon as an example, and the work of the Special Committee on the Constitution of Ceylon, the memo cited as a key finding of that body, that when power is divorced from responsibility, "its inevitable sequels are legislative obstruction and administrative paralysis. The Executive is compelled to make further and further concessions to the majority in the legislature in order to secure the normal passage of legislation and the peace of the country." The Agency memo further asserted that given the temper of the Arab leaders, the proposed Legislative Council would not become an instrument of constructive cooperation, nor could it until two prior conditions were met: "(1) a basic acceptance, by all parties concerned, of the fundamental framework of the State with all its implications and (2) an acute sense of the inherent limitations of majority rule." The Agency was convinced that neither condition then existed in Palestine. And finally, asserting that there was first a need for a modus vivendi between the two communities, the Jewish Agency, reiterating a Weizmann proposal of September 19, 1930, called for the British government to convene an Arab-Zionist-British Round Table Conference "for the purpose of exploring the best way of reaching an amicable and constructive agreement . . . for . . . effective cooperation."

Other Jewish Agency concerns were the issues of immigration, economic development, and the extreme lethargy of the Mandatory Government. The Agency blamed the Palestine administration for failure to hand out as many immigration permits as demanded by the absorptive capacity of the economy; failure to increase

the employment of Jews in Government and on government projects; failure to undertake agricultural reforms, particularly as recommended by Hope-Simpson; and failure to invest appropriate funds in much needed development projects. This was particularly galling since the budget was running a handsome surplus, generated mostly by the Jewish sector. All of these failures were perceived as aggravating the peril of European Jews who required a refuge. Palestine was the only place where a Jew, according to the 1922 White Paper, could "come as of right and not on sufferance."

In a lengthy letter dated June 14, 1934, Poale Zion pressed home to the British Labour Party's International Department how concerned it was about the Mandatory's economic foot-dragging. It asserted that the failure to issue labour certificates in sufficient numbers was leading to a number of undesirable consequences, among them a labour shortage, artificially high industrial wage rates, an undesirable shift by part of the Jewish population from rural to urban employment, and the hiring of 'cheap' Arab labour due to economic necessity. All of these were seen as detrimental to the kind of economic development Labour Zionism envisioned. The arguments about the Legislative Council and the economy advanced by the Jewish Agency and Poale Zion were sufficiently convincing for officials inside British Labour's executive to recommend that the Parliamentary Party adopt a critical attitude to the government on the issues of immigration and development, and resist any proposal for a Legislative Council in Palestine.

But Palestine no matter how important to Zionism, was never a vital issue for the rank and file of the British Labour Party. It is true that a few individuals and restricted circles within the Party made the National Home a personal as well as a political concern, but the bulk of the membership knew little and cared less. Britons had too many other pressing problems at home and abroad. Support for the National

Home at British Labour Party Annual Conferences was for many participants a pro forma exercise.

In the elections of June 1935, both major British parties issued predictable statements of support for Zionism. On November 7, 1935, Neville Chamberlain, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, sent the following message to British Zionists:

You may be assured that it is the policy of the Government to carry out to the letter and in the spirit the Mandate for Palestine. They will discharge without fear or favour their obligations under that Mandate; and, while safeguarding the civil and religious rights of the non-Jewish communities will continue to facilitate the establishment of a National Home in Palestine for the Jewish people.⁴

Other Conservative candidates issued statements in a similar vein. The Labour Party's stand was stronger, more passionate and more cognizant of the Jewish situation in Europe as well as in Palestine.

The British Labour Party recalls with pride that in the dark days of the Great War they associated themselves with the idea of a National Home in Palestine for the Jewish People, and that, ever since, the Annual Conferences of the Party have repeatedly affirmed their enthusiastic support of the effort towards its realization.

They have never faltered, and will never falter, in their active and sympathetic cooperation with the great work of political and economic reconstruction now going forward in Palestine. This work is all the more necessary --indeed it has become an imperious duty -- when German Jews have to bear the burden of other people's sins and the civilized world reverberates with their unexpected and unmerited sorrow and suffering.⁵

The Coalition government was re-elected, but Stanley Baldwin, a Conservative, succeeded Ramsay MacDonald in the premiership. In February 1936, during a House of Lords debate on a revived proposal for a Legislative Council for Palestine, Lord Snell, former member of the Shaw Commission and leader of the Labour Opposition in the House of Lords, asked the Government to postpone its establishment "until greater experience of local government in that country had been obtained."⁶ The Earl of Plymouth speaking for the Government said that in the considered opinion of

the High Commissioner, the establishment of a Legislative Council should be postponed no longer. The speaker then went on to add that although he could understand Jewish doubts and fears about the likely behavior of such a Council, he did not think they were well founded.

On April 19, 1936, an Arab riot broke out on the municipal boundary of Jaffa and Tel-Aviv. It took the Mandatory government two days to restore order. In the meantime, there arose a call within the Arab community for a general strike. On April 20, Arab political leaders meeting at Nablus elected an executive group, the Arab Higher Committee, to lead them. The Committee promised that the general strike would persist until three demands were satisfied: an end to Jewish immigration, termination of land sales to Jews, and the establishment of a national representative government for Palestine. During the strike, which lasted six months, a terror campaign was unleashed against Jews, Mandate officials and their respective properties.

In May, the British government appointed a Royal Commission under Viscount Peel:

. . . to ascertain the underlying causes of the disturbances which broke out in Palestine . . . to inquire into the manner in which the Mandate . . . is being implemented . . . whether . . . either the Arab or Jews have any legitimate grievances . . . to make recommendations for their removal and for the prevention of their recurrence.⁷

The Commission visited Palestine from November 11, 1936 to January 17, 1937.⁸ The Arabs boycotted their hearings until just prior to the Commission's departure. The strike ended in the second week of October, due to the confluence of several factors including the threat of British military power, active Jewish resistance, vigorous use of the police and an appeal by some rulers of neighbouring Arab states.

On May 14, 1936, Berl Locker, on behalf of the Federation of Jewish Labour in Palestine,⁹ penned a long memorandum to the British Labour Party's International

Secretariat. The memo was very critical of the British government's understanding of the issues as reflected by the Colonial Secretary's statement to the House of Commons on April 23, wherein he had treated the strife as "clashes between Arabs and Jews."¹⁰ These remarks suggested an equality of guilt, a most unacceptable description of events which the High Commissioner himself had concluded were instigated by Arabs. Jewish casualties were caused by the Arabs; Arab casualties were caused by the police. Locker's memo went on to identify the event as not being an unexpected and isolated outbreak. He pointed out that,

. . . for some considerable time . . . the atmosphere of the country has been exceptionally tense, due to an uninterrupted campaign of incitement by the extreme Arab political groups and especially by the Arab press . . . what wicked legends . . . circulated as intellectual goods to ignorant masses and to an incited youth. In no other country in the world would such mass poisoning of public opinion be permitted in the name of the 'freedom of the press.' The same effect is naturally produced by oral 'enlightenment' in the Mosques, cafes, in schools, villages, etc. The Arab Scout Movement, sections of which are fostered by the Education Department of the Government -- has become one of the main centres of anti-Jewish propaganda.¹¹

He charged the Mandatory government with helping to make Arab actions possible by an attitude which was a compound of weakness and contradiction. Locker concluded that this had produced a severe loss of confidence, widespread bitterness and fears for the Yishuv's future. He went so far as to suggest that perhaps this was the Palestine Government's answer to recent opposition criticism in parliament. In effect:

Both the Jews' and British public opinion are to be clearly shown that there are only two alternatives: Legislative Council or disturbances.¹²

The memo also expressed fears that a new 1930 type White Paper might be in the offing. He finished with a compliment to the Labour Party for its historical support of the Jewish National Home and expressed the hope that Labour would continue in that tradition.

On May 27, 1936, the Arab Labour Federation of Jaffa sent the British Labour Party's International Department a telegram appealing to the party for a probe of the events surrounding the recent strife. Their cable asserted that innocent workers were being killed during a strike whose essence was peaceful protest against Jewish influence on British Government policy. The telegram reminded Labour that British promises made during the Great War were neglected and that Britain was losing respect and confidence among Arabs and Moslems everywhere. Its authors called for a policy change.

On August 31, 1936, the Palestine Jewish Labour Party addressed to its British counterpart an impassioned cable which detailed the consequences of the general strike and terrorist outbreak.¹³ It castigated the Mandatory government in much the same way as Locker's memo, but raised a new concern and requested Labour party intervention. The essence of the matter was a fear that the British government would surrender to violence and take the easy way out by suspending Jewish immigration. The Labour Party's response was immediate, and supportive; within the week representations to the Colonial Secretary were made by Mr. Attlee, leader of the Party in Parliament.

Shortly thereafter, the Labour Party, meeting in Annual Conference in Edinburgh, found itself confronted with two resolutions on Palestine. The first, supplied by Poale Zion, deplored the violence, called on the Mandatory to do more for the Arab and Jewish worker and requested the Government to be more aggressive in carrying out its dual obligation. The second regretted that Jewish and Arab workers had allowed themselves to be manipulated by their common oppressor -- British capitalism.¹⁴ The first resolution was supplanted by an emergency resolution sponsored by the National Executive Committee. It affirmed support for the National Home, called on the government to be more vigorous in suppressing

disorder and upheld the principle of an ongoing Mandate.¹⁵ The second resolution was defeated because it was perceived as unproductive.

While these events were unfolding in Palestine, the Labour Party's Advisory Committee on Imperial Affairs was in receipt of interim recommendations for a long-term party policy on Palestine. These came from a sub-committee created expressly for that purpose. At its second meeting on August 26, 1935, the sub-committee agreed that its general objective was to seek the "welfare of the inhabitants of Palestine and the establishment there of a Jewish National Home."¹⁶ Under a sub-heading The Mandate, the sub-committee held that:

The Mandate should continue until Palestine is in a position to be self-governing and until such time as Arabs and Jews can live together in tolerable harmony politically and economically. It should not be given up except in accordance with the clearly expressed wish of the leading communities of Palestine.

The sub-committee also recommended that the Jewish National Home not be extended to Transjordan, but that Britain use its good offices to make it possible for Jews and others to settle there. By February 1936 a modified form of this report was being circulated in party circles under the aegis of the parent committee. There was a change in the wording of the general objective as well as a recommendation for the evolution of self-government. The new general objective was to be the wording of Article 2 of the Mandate.

The Mandatory shall be responsible for placing the country under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish national home, as laid down in the preamble, and the development of self-governing institutions, and also for safeguarding the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine, irrespective of race and religion.¹⁷

The proposal for a Legislative Council was turned down because it meant starting self-government from the apex rather than the base. In the sub-committee's view local self-government was the best first step in the process.

In January 1937, while the Peel Commission was winding up its enquiry, the Advisory Committee on Imperial Affairs received a memorandum on Palestine policy from one of the sub-committee's members, Miss Susan Lawrence. In her opening Miss Lawrence took the unusual stand of "explaining" the Arab case which she construed to be a consequence of substantial neglect by the Mandatory administration.¹⁸ The core of her argument was that the growing disparity in living standards between Jews and Arabs could be narrowed only by a Palestine administration prepared to do more for the Arab community, particularly with respect to health services and education. She also stressed the need for improvements in labour legislation. Her most elaborate recommendations dealt with the economic condition of the fellaheen (peasantry); she called for very substantial increases in the investment of Mandatory revenues in public works, land reclamation and agricultural modernization. In effect, Miss Lawrence wanted the Mandatory government to assume for Arabs a role parallel to the one being carried out for the Yishuv by the Jewish Agency. The funds she asserted were there in the form of handsome budgetary surpluses; it required only the will.

On February 10, 1937, the Palestine sub-committee adopted in advance of the Peel Report, and possibly with advance knowledge of its intention to recommend partition, a set of modified recommendations. The opening paragraph is worth reproducing in full:

Britain's policy in Palestine has oscillated somewhat between attempts to reconcile Arab and Jews and attempts to equalize the organization of each side, such as the balancing of races in proposed legislatures and a proposed Arab agency to face up to the Jewish one. The policy of reconciliation is the correct one and should be consistently pursued, subversive communalism and its champions being discouraged. Arabs and Jews and other residents of Palestine should be invited to become good Palestinians. Proposals to segregate Jews and Arabs in cantons, even if physically and administratively feasible, are unsound as cantons would merely stereotype communalism, and foster disruptive and factious sentiment.¹⁹

The memo expressed support for continued Jewish immigration based on the principle of economic absorptive capacity but included a clause over which the sub-committee split evenly. It read:

For a period of ten years the immigration of Jews should be also governed by a proviso that the present relative proportions of Jews and Arabs in Palestine should be preserved approximately.

It was intended to allay Arab apprehensions about Jewish immigration by freezing the population ratio at the then existing level. This recommendation along with another calling for the introduction of partial self-government was undoubtedly a reaction to the communal strife of 1936. With pointed regard for the danger and deceptiveness of analogy, the memo cited Canada and white South Africa as examples of how antagonism between national communities could be transmuted into cooperation through the assumption of the 'blessed burden of responsibility'.

Previous proposals for legislatures in Palestine were unsound because they did not propose to grant executive responsibility to the legislators. They proposed to divorce power from responsibility. There should not be communal constituencies and the possibility of the first election securing a majority of Arabs should not invalidate the proposals.

Such an approach would "combine Jew and Arab in practical, responsible administration and confront both with the possibility of being called on to give effect in office to their policy." The memo went on to propose that the High Commissioner retain ultimate say in external affairs, immigration, defence, administration of justice and finance. Wide powers of initiative and veto were to remain vested in the High Commissioner, particularly should he have to deal with a situation of non-cooperation. In an addendum, Miss Susan Lawrence argued that elections to any legislative body in Palestine should be based on a system of proportional representation. She felt that "communal representation has the effect of the fiercest man being chosen on each side. If, however, the candidates have to consider the votes of third parties . . . a moderating influence comes in."²⁰

In April 1937 the Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions circulated an amended version of the February 10 Palestine sub-committee report under the title, Long Term Policy for Palestine. This was to be their most definitive effort prior to the publication of Peel's report. The segment on Constructive Proposals began with the placement of the Palestine Question in a wider context:

The Palestine problem is not a local affair; it has international significance. The League of Nations is concerned. The Arab states near Palestine have developed a strong national sentiment, which was recognized by Britain in Iraq, by France in Syria. About 100,000,000 Moslems in various places are deeply interested as are 15,000,000 Jews all over the world, both Jews and Moslems as a rule combining religious views with political aspirations. The British Empire is vitally affected as Palestine is the Eastern outpost to any attack on The Suez Canal. Egypt is similarly vitally affected. . . . The Jews more than ever need a National Home or refuge somewhere from Fascist persecution and Poland is strongly pressing for an outlet for its poverty-stricken Jews.²¹

The sub-committee asserted that the (British) "policy of reconciliation is the correct one . . . communalism discouraged . . . Arabs and Jews and other residents of Palestine should be invited to become good Palestinians". The Advisory Committee held that the Mandatory should not stop Jewish immigration but rather that absorptive capacity be more carefully gauged by taking into account all economic factors. In addition they recommended that:

Apart from economic considerations, for a period of ten years, the immigration of Jews should also be regulated in such a way that the Arabs would be assured of a substantial and fixed majority over the Jews in the population of the country at the end of that period, such majority to be fixed at the beginning of the period by the Mandatory Power. By a substantial majority is meant something like 60% of the whole population.

In the matter of self-government they felt it still inadvisable to attempt to establish an elected legislature with a responsible executive because there was an insufficient level of amity between the two communities. They did, however, urge the extension of self-government so "that Arabs and Jews could learn to cooperate at lower levels of government."

The April 1937 report was thus strongly committed to an undivided Palestine. Fine tuning Jewish immigration and fixing an Arab-Jewish population ratio to Arab advantage were designed to allay Arab fears about being overwhelmed while both communities were granted a substantial and perhaps final breathing space to pursue a modus vivendi.

Notes

1. Kenneth W. Stein, The Land Question in Palestine 1917 - 1939 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press), Appendix I, pp. 223-235.
2. The scheme called for 22 members plus the High Commissioner. Ten were to be appointed officials; 12 were to be elected (8 Muslims, 2 Christians, 2 Jews).
3. Executive of the Jewish Agency for Palestine to the British Labour Party's International Department. "On The Proposed Establishment of A Legislative Council in Palestine." October 4, 1934. p.2 L.A.
4. Jewish Telegraphic Agency Bulletin, November 11, 1935. JSM/210/125/2 L.A.
5. Daily Herald, November 11, 1935.
6. "Jews Fear Loss of Palestine Rights", The Times, February 27, 1936.
7. Cmd. 5479. Palestine Royal Commission Report. July 1937. p. vi.
8. The Royal Commission was appointed on August 7, 1936. Earl Peel had been former Secretary of State for India. Commission members were: Sir H.G.M. Rumbold, Sir E.L.L. Hammond, Sir W.M. Carter, Sir H. Morris, and Professor R. Coupland. Its report was the most thorough study of the problem of Palestine to that date.
9. Berl Locker (1887 - 1971) was a leading activist in Poale Zion primarily at the international level. During the Great War he was assigned to work at the Hague. He became Secretary of the Central Office of Poale Zion in 1928, secretary of Poale Zion in America 1931 - 1935. He moved to Jerusalem in 1936 but remained active in cultivating the party's interests within the Socialist International and the British Labour Party.
10. Locker to William Gillies, International Secretary of the Labour Party. May 14, 1936. Memorandum actually written May 4. WG/PAL/79. L.A.
11. Ibid., p. 4.
12. Ibid., p. 12.
13. Palestine Jewish Labour Party to British Labour Party. August 31, 1936. Signatories were Dov Hoz, Golda Myerson, David Remez. WG/PAL/99 L.A.
14. The Labour Party Resolutions Booklet, Annual Conference, 1936. p. 43.
15. The Labour Party Conference Report, 1936. pp. 217 - 219. L.A.
16. Minutes of the Palestine Sub-Committee's second meeting, August 26, 1935. Membership included N. Bentwich, T. Reid and G.T. Garratt. Dr. Drummond Shiels joined prior to December 1935. L.A.

17. Doreen Ingrams (ed.), Palestine Papers 1917 - 1922: Seeds of Conflict (London: John Murray, 1972), p. 178.
18. Susan Lawrence to Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions. No. 176, January 1937. L.A.
19. Memorandum of Palestine sub-committee. February 10, 1937. L.A.
20. Addendum to Memorandum. No. 181. February 1937. LP/IMPAC/3/33 L.A.
21. Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions. Palestine. No. 179C, April 1937, p.5. JSM/210/135 or LP/IMPAC/3/36. L.A.

Chapter 4

The Peel Report and Partition (1937)

The Peel Commission's Report was published on July 7, 1937; its central finding was that the Palestine Mandate had become unworkable. Their solution was a radical tripartite division which would have yielded two new states, one Jewish, one Arab, and a reduced Mandate which would have left key strategic points in British hands (Haifa, Aqaba, Lydda airport and the Sarafand army complex). The British Mandate would include the cities of Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Jaffa with a connecting land and rail corridor. The Jewish state would consist of the Galilee, the Jezreel Valley and most of the coastal plain to a point just south of Ashdod, an area of some 1,500 square miles. However, within that state Jewish sovereignty was not to be total; Britain was to continue to enjoy 'temporary' control over Tiberias, Acre and Haifa. The remainder of Palestine was to be united with Transjordan, thus forming an Arab State, in which a small enclave around Aqaba was to be placed under 'temporary' British control.

When the Peel Report came before the Cabinet in June 1937, it received a mixed reception. Ormsby-Gore, the Colonial Secretary, argued for cabinet endorsement;¹ his officials viewed partition as the best available way to extricate His Majesty's Government from what was becoming an impossible situation. Opposition in cabinet was spearheaded by Anthony Eden, the Foreign Secretary.² Most of his officials, whether stationed in London or the Middle East had counselled rejection. Much of the vigour infusing that advice was owed to the inordinate efforts of George Rendel, long-serving influential Head of the Foreign Office's Eastern Department.

Rendel perceived the Middle East as a racial and cultural whole. On that questionable premise, he argued that any British actions inimical to any part of that whole would inevitably damage British interests in the remainder. Rendel actively orchestrated an anti-partition movement within the Foreign Office. His solution for Palestine called for a fixed Arab-Jewish population ratio eternally weighted in favour of the former. If that could be achieved, Rendel expected that Arab fears about becoming a minority would subside and law and order would return to Palestine. Regional Arab and Muslim interests would undoubtedly approve of such a solution, thereby enhancing Britain's position in Palestine and the Middle East. Rendel was able to convince his immediate superiors who, in turn, were able to influence Anthony Eden. It should be noted that the Foreign Secretary had relatively little time for the Palestine Question; the rising tide of Fascism and its implications for Europe's peace and security demanded most of his attention.

In January 1937, in a private letter to Ormsby-Gore, Eden enclosed a memorandum which contained Rendel's proposals for Palestine. Eden was apparently hoping that Ormsby-Gore would permit it to be circulated within the cabinet. The Colonial Secretary took issue with Rendel's premise and pointed out the impropriety of cabinet consideration at a time when the Peel Commission had just begun to write its report, a report which the Cabinet would have to weigh on its own merits. Not to be put off, Rendel then tried to convince Eden to circulate the memorandum to other ministers as a 'background' piece, but was refused. In April 1937 Rendel had the temerity to ask Eden to allow the memorandum to be submitted to the Peel Commission "as expressing the views of an anonymous official who has had a good deal of opportunity of studying the question."³ When Eden referred that proposal to the Colonial Office the response was an indignant rejection. In a minute dated April 14, 1937, Ormsby-

Gore held that he could not admit a subordinate of another ministry "the right to submit to a Royal Commission his erroneous opinion of that policy."⁴

However, while rejecting one attempt at Foreign Office intrusion into his area of responsibility, Ormsby-Gore had permitted another, which in the long run proved more detrimental to his ministry. Foreign Office involvement had been rooted in the department's reaction to the Palestine disturbances of 1936. By the beginning of October of that year the Foreign Office, with Colonial Office concurrence, had substantially complicated the search for solutions. This followed from a complex round of 'consultations' initiated by a number of Arab leaders. Ultimately, the talks led to British approval for 'foreign' intervention in the form of an appeal to end the strike by Heads of State of some neighbouring Arab countries.

Three days prior to the appeal's issuance, on October 10, 1936, the Colonial and Foreign Offices became disconcerted by Britain's chief military officer in Palestine, Air Marshall Sir John Dill. He had been pressing for a declaration of martial law in order to show law-breaking elements that they could not continue to defy the Mandatory regime. Such an action would have probably undercut the Arab states' appeal and restored some of the prestige of the Mandatory Government. Dill's hand was stayed by Foreign and Colonial Office pressure. On October 12, the strike was officially suspended; Wauchope, the High Commissioner, sent a secret message to the Palestine Arab leadership expressing his gratitude for their decision.⁵ But the ending of the violence in this manner was to prove a poor deal. The rebels gave up nothing; they kept their arms and organizations, while coming away with enhanced prestige. Credit for helping to end the strike went to Arab leaders whose subsequent interventions would do more harm than good to the Arab cause in Palestine.

The Peel Report offered to Palestine's Arabs the substantial fulfillment of a long sought goal, an independent state, albeit in only three fifth's of the territory

claimed. Such a state might have gone a very long way to relieving Arab fears of being swamped by foreigners and losing their lands in the process, for undoubtedly the proposed state would have been able to control its own immigration and land policies. Yet the Arab commitment to the 'wholeness' of their Palestine made it almost impossible for any member of their community to accept anything less. The Palestinian Arab leadership rejected partition categorically in principle, as well as the Peel proposal in practice.

The first to say so publicly was the National Defence Party. This group, built around the Nashashibi clan, severed its ties with the Arab Higher Committee four days before the publication of the Peel Report. This rupture at such a crucial time was rooted in the matter of the Committee's leadership, which reflected a mixture of Husseini arbitrariness and intimidation. On July 11, 1937, the National Defence Party followed up its first public denunciation of the Peel Report with identical memoranda to the British Colonial Office and the League of Nations. Simply put, they were not prepared to see Palestine's best land or most developed areas go to the Jews, nor would they permit a large Arab population to be placed permanently under Jewish rule or British Mandate. Their counter-proposals were simple and straightforward: the immediate creation of a sovereign democratic state with constitutional guarantees for minorities, a freeze in the Arab-Jewish population at the existing ratio and an end to Jewish land purchase in those areas Peel had designated for the proposed Arab state. This initiative by the National Defence party served a number of purposes. Since they were the first to say 'no', they were able to buttress their nationalist credentials, which was important because there had been rumours that the Nashishibis favoured some sort of partition.⁶ Minorities guarantees offered a constitutionally-based assurance for the future of the Yishuv. Their proposals for a fixed population ratio and restricted land purchase would have severely curtailed but not totally precluded further Jewish immigration and land acquisition.

Less than a fortnight later, the somewhat emasculated Arab Higher Committee declared its position in identical memoranda to the British Colonial Office and the League of Nations' Mandates Commission. The Committee vigorously rejected partition. They also took umbrage at the idea of leaving any substantial Arab population or Arab-owned land under Jewish rule. They foresaw the proposed Arab state as perpetually insolvent, a standing invitation to Jewish economic penetration. They predicted that population pressures arising from mass immigration into the Jewish state would lead inevitably to a scenario involving illicit Jewish infiltration into the Arab state, a Zionist irredentist movement and ultimate annexation by the Jewish state. By extrapolation other Arab states would eventually be threatened as well. The committee rejected any residual Mandate for Great Britain; instead they called for an end to the Mandate, the National Home experiment, Jewish immigration and land purchase. They also demanded the immediate creation of a sovereign Palestine, which would be prepared to accord Britain special rights like those she enjoyed in Iraq by virtue of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930.⁷ There would be no constitutional guarantees for the Jews. In fact, whatever the Higher Committee intended for the Jews was not stated.

At the request of the Higher Committee over three hundred representatives, from all over the Arab world convened in a Pan-Arab Congress at Bludan, Syria (September 8 - 10, 1937). Many came from political groups (in Egypt, the Levant States and Iraq) which were not represented in their respective governments. The meeting which had been called to consider the Palestine situation in the light of the 1936 general strike overwhelmingly rejected the Peel plan. In its stead the Congress demanded that the Mandate be terminated and that Palestine be established as an independent state in alliance with Great Britain. They insisted that Jewish immigration be stopped, and the existing Jewish community be granted the status of

a guaranteed minority within an Arab Palestine. The Congress also established a permanent executive, arranged for assistance to the Palestine Arabs and made plans for boycotting Jewish, and if necessary, British goods and enterprises.

In the light of this unanimous rejection of the Peel Report, the Arab states immediately began to press His Majesty's Government to abandon any thought of partition. Even the Emir Abdullah of Transjordan, who stood to gain much from the Peel scheme, dared not publicly support it. Representations by the Arab states were reinforced by the Foreign Office. George Rendel canvassed opinion from key Foreign Office personnel serving in the Middle East, and whenever their replies were anti-partition, they became part of the brief advanced to the Foreign Secretary. Rendel was convinced that partition was an unmitigated evil. He was also certain that if it were abandoned and Jewish immigration stopped or sharply restrained, peace would come to Palestine, which, following the publication of the Peel Report had been plunged into renewed violence.

Peel's recommended Jewish State was considerably smaller than that which most Jews, let alone Zionists, understood to comprise the territory of Eretz Israel (the Land of Israel). But a Jewish state, with control over its own immigration promised an opportunity to save some of Europe's threatened Jews. It also meant psychological liberation; after nearly 1,900 years a portion of the Jewish people would be free of the Jewish minority syndrome. Palestinian Jews did not have to look over their shoulders to see whether Gentiles were watching. In addition, the self-esteem of Jews abroad would undoubtedly be enhanced by association with the achievements of the Jewish state.

Initial response by major Zionist leaders was guarded. In private they displayed restrained satisfaction with the principle of partition because it promised what many Zionists had always wanted, a Jewish state. But this particular partition of Palestine

offered too little territory. The right-wing, Zionist Revisionists were instantly and thoroughly hostile.⁸ Led by Vladimir Jabotinsky,⁹ this considerable faction had seceded from the World Zionist Organization after the 18th Zionist Congress (Prague 1933) because they could not accept the principle of majority rule. Jabotinsky's New Zionist Organization favoured a simple proposition, a Jewish majority in a sovereign state on both sides of the Jordan.

In the period between the issuance of Peel's Report and the formal response expected from the World Zionist Congress scheduled for Zurich, in August, 1937 pro-Zionist British parliamentarians in all three major parties found themselves perplexed. They hesitated to take a firm stand until they knew what the Zionist Congress wanted. The situation was exacerbated for Labour M.P.s because the advice which had come from their Advisory Committee on Imperial Affairs in April 1937 ran contrary to Peel's recommendations. A further complication arose when the Zurich Congress agreed to partition only if a more favourable territorial division could be achieved.

The Congress' conditional approval of the principle of partition on August 2, 1937 did not sit well with the British Labour Party. Part of the reason lay in the uncertainty which Zionists had fostered by their approaches to partition. Key Zionist spokesmen had been giving contradictory signals both before and after publication of the Peel Report. In early 1937 David Ben-Gurion, leader of Mapai, shared with British Labour's Palestine sub-committee the Jewish Agency's analysis of developments in Palestine.¹⁰ When asked about his organization's views on a possible partition of Palestine, he came out against it. He argued that Eretz-Israel, if it were to fulfill the roles of ingathering and settling, could not afford a third division. He counted the loss of the Hauran to French mandated Syria and exclusion of Transjordan from the National Home provisions as the first two partitions. At that

meeting Ben-Gurion was speaking to the converted, although his motives were quite different from theirs.

On June 8, approximately a month before the Peel Report's publication, Chaim Weizmann attended a private meeting of leading pro-Zionist political figures drawn from all three British political parties.¹¹ There, Weizmann spoke in favour of partition. He saw any proposal for a sovereign Jewish state as a practical means of providing refuge for many of Europe's persecuted Jews. Winston Churchill expressed strong reservations about the value of any partition scheme, but indicated a willingness to refrain from public criticism should that be what the Zionist leadership preferred. Clement Attlee, then leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party, was most adamantly opposed to any division of Palestine as an act of gross appeasement, a "confession of failure in the working of the Mandate . . . a triumph for Fascism."¹² For Attlee the Mandate and the Jewish National Home had been worth supporting primarily because they were the core of an internationally sanctioned experiment in the cooperative evolution and modernization of two peoples. Attlee and Labourites of like mind were loyal to the universalist and socialist elements of the Mandate and National Home. Attlee, however, had no feeling for the Jewish nationalist element in Zionism, an insensitivity which was then still shared by much of the European Left. Like Churchill, Attlee was, however, prepared to withhold criticism of partition if that was what the Zionists desired. Obviously he saw little future in leading a parliamentary assault against partition if it was wanted by both His Majesty's Government and the Zionists.

Less than two weeks after Peel's Report had been issued, British Labour's International Department received a lengthy Poale Zion critique, dated July 16, 1937. Its author, Dov Hoz, took issue with both the reasoning and the recommendations of the Peel Commission:

We challenge the conclusion that the Mandate is inherently unworkable. The whole weight of evidence in the Report itself supports the thesis that the Mandate is workable, but that it has been badly administered.

. . . The present proposal of Partition as recommended by the Royal Commission is completely at variance with the pledge and intentions not only of Great Britain but also of the 52 nations who endorsed the Mandate, is out of keeping with Jewish achievements in Palestine, recognized by the Royal Commission; and takes no account of the vital needs of world Jewry.¹³

Hoz reminded Labour that as far back as their 1921 Annual Conference, the party had taken an anti-partitionist stance. Their resolution on Palestine had urged the British Government of the day

. . . to put an end to the unnatural and harmful division of the British Mandate territory and to effect the unity of Eastern with Western Palestine.¹⁴

Hoz asserted that British Labour's apprehensions in 1921 had been fully justified; neither Palestine nor Transjordan had done well from their artificial separation whose prime effect had been to restrict the possibilities for Jewish settlement and development. Most Labour M.P.s, still influenced by a belief in the Mandate's ability to foster the union of two peoples, were reluctant to approve of partition as the basis for a settlement. Others perhaps inclined to agree with the principle of division, attacked the specifics for being too flawed and impractical. In the end, the British Labour benches chose not to force the issue to a vote. They supported, instead, a resolution which temporarily shelved the question. In that way they bought time for all the concerned parties to reassess their positions. One of the most involved Labour M.P.s, Arthur Creech-Jones, wrote in very approving terms of the House's refusal to endorse the partition scheme.¹⁵ He interpreted the debate as

. . . a remarkable assertion of Parliamentary supremacy over Executive policy. It was, in fact, a significant achievement by the Parliamentary Labour.¹⁶

He then articulated the questions which existed in the minds of his colleagues.

Would Jew and Arab, faced with the prospect of partition, be prepared to find some arrangement more likely to give them satisfaction than partition? Was partition a way out of all the difficulties discovered by the Royal Commission? Would it work?

By year's end the British government's commitment to partition had weakened considerably. Arab opposition, including a new armed revolt in Palestine, lukewarm support from Jewish Zionist and non-Zionist circles, and Foreign Office opposition combined to sap the Cabinet's resolve. Best evidence of this lay in the January 1938 Command paper titled Policy in Palestine, which was actually the reprint of a December 23, 1937 dispatch from the Colonial Secretary to the High Commissioner in Jerusalem. In his introduction which focussed on the terms of reference for a new technical commission charged with making specific partition recommendations, Ormsby-Gore wrote:

I wish to make it clear that His Majesty's Government are in no sense committed to approval of that plan¹⁷

At the same time he informed the High Commissioner that the permanent Mandates Commission and its parent body, the League Council, approved the further study of ". . . the problem of the status of Palestine . . . concentrating on a solution involving partition of the territory."¹⁸ Ormsby-Gore indicated that many months would be needed for each stage from technical committee report to partition, should that be the choice of His Majesty's Government subject, of course, to the approval of the League of Nations Council. Those Jewish circles who expected this White Paper to contain a definite decision to divide Palestine were sorely disappointed. David Ben-Gurion in the course of a lengthy critique wrote:

Establishment of the Jewish State is, according to this dispatch, deferred for a lengthy and undefined period, while the possibility of its establishment is so hedged round with contingencies as to raise serious doubts as to the Government's real intentions.¹⁹

Ben-Gurion called it a 'do nothing policy'. He urged Zionists to mount a two-pronged political campaign. The ultimate goal was an 'acceptable' partition offer which would lead to the creation of Jewish state. The intermediate goal was continued British fulfillment of the Mandate as interpreted and confirmed by the League of Nations.

Some in British Labour's ranks, remained unconvinced that a Jewish state was the most desirable solution. In a letter addressed to J.S. Middleton, L. Bakstansky, General Secretary of the British Zionist Federation, expressed deep concern over Attlee's outlook. Apparently Attlee had made a private suggestion that territories besides Palestine ought to be considered (for Jewish refugee settlement) and that gave Bastansky "many sleepless nights."²⁰ A. Creech-Jones, then considered a pro-Zionist M.P., counselled reaffirmation of Mandatory obligations, as a more worthwhile pursuit than the achievement of a shrunken Eretz Israel. His was the voice of principle allied to pragmatism. If Jews in sufficient numbers could be saved while the National Home continued to grow, then statehood could wait. A stronger Yishuv would undoubtedly be in a better position to pursue independence. On July 28, 1938, Susan Lawrence weighed in with a memorandum to Labour's International Department calling for a pro-partition policy on the basis of modifications to the Peel Report. She argued:

If we were in power, or if the situation was less acute, we might hope yet to make something of the Mandate. But under present circumstances, I believe that some scheme of partition would be in the best interests of the country [Palestine].²¹

On February 10, 1938, the Parliamentary Labour Party and Labour's International Committee met in the House of Commons. David Ben-Gurion, who was then in London, was asked to attend. At the meeting he heard Labour suggest that the government seemed to be in the process of abandoning partition, if it had not already done so. Ben-Gurion then told those in attendance that he actually favoured partition. He explained that his previous anti-partition stance was a result of being

unable to declare himself while his organization had not done so. He opined that Arab circles might think partition not so terrible if Zionism were so adamantly opposed. He indicated that Weizmann's position of calling for a state now was also his, with the proviso that it include a larger portion of Palestine. Until that could be achieved he hoped British Labour would ally itself with the call for greater 'rescue' immigration. When someone at the meeting suggested that the Party strike a subgroup to look at amended partition proposals, Attlee quickly deflected the notion. He was not prepared to put that particular cart first; the party had not voted for partition and he personally was opposed. After Ben-Gurion left, the meeting decided to continue criticising His Majesty's Government for maladministration and abandonment of the Mandate. It also agreed to pressure the Government for an early and decisive policy statement, to maintain a non-committal position on the principle of partition and to display greater concern for the issue of Jewish immigration. In a very perceptive analysis of the temper of that meeting Ben-Gurion wrote:

... within the Labour Party there are, relatively speaking, more people who sympathize with Zionism than in other parties. This is because it is a humanistic party and because the labour movement is playing a major part in the Palestine endeavour. There is a friendship between the two parties. But we should not exaggerate the significance of this friendship.²²

Ben-Gurion had come away with an uneasy sense that Labour leaders did not have a full appreciation (read commitment to Ben-Gurion's understanding) of Zionism. He also felt that some of the leaders, particularly Attlee, were still too open to solving the Jewish question by emphasis on territories other than Palestine.

On February 28, 1938, to the surprise of the Zionists, His Majesty's Government announced the appointment of a 'technical' commission usually titled Woodhead after its chairman to explore the possibilities of dividing Palestine as suggested by the Peel Report.²³ It had to propose boundaries that would make feasible the existence of two self sufficient states; this meant the smallest number of Arabs, Arab owned lands

and enterprises in the Jewish state and vice versa. The long delay between the Peel Report's issuance and the announcement of the technical commission's terms of reference gave the Foreign Office time to muster all its anti-partitionist arguments.

The infighting between the Colonial and Foreign Office over the technical commission's proposed terms of reference was fierce. The upshot of that struggle was a decisive victory for the Foreign Office. Eden convinced his Cabinet colleagues to accept alterations which included permission to hear representations not relevant to partition. He also successfully won their approval to two significant excisions from the terms of reference. The first was a clause which had stated that a permanent minority position for Jews in Palestine was incompatible with the Balfour Declaration; the second was a declaration of intention to implement partition whether there was or was not cooperation (i.e., by force, if necessary). Given these alterations and the known views of the British civil and military authorities in Palestine, the Foreign Office was confident that the Woodhead Commission was programmed to fail, and when it did so the Foreign Office view would be vindicated.²⁴

The Woodhead Commission published its conclusions on November 9, 1938. The Commission examined three plans. Plan 'A' was the Peel proposal; it was rejected unanimously because it included too many Arabs and too much Arab-owned land in the Jewish state. Plans 'B' and 'C' reduced the Jewish portion and enlarged both the Arab state and the British Mandate, but neither scheme was able to command a majority. Ultimately, the Commission concluded that:

. . . on a strict interpretation of their terms of reference, they have no alternative but to report that they are unable to recommend boundaries for the proposed areas which will afford a reasonable prospect of the eventual establishment of self-supporting Arab and Jewish States.²⁵

Notes

1. William George Ormsby-Gore (1885 - 1964), statesman and colonial affairs expert, was introduced to Zionism in 1916, while serving in the Cairo based Arab Bureau. In 1917, as a member of the Cabinet Secretariat, he participated in the political activity which led to the Balfour Declaration. In 1918 he was the liaison officer between the British authorities in Palestine and the Zionist Commission headed by Weizmann. He was Secretary of State for the Colonies from 1936 to 1938; his handling of Palestine matters during his term of office diminished his former reputation as a good friend of Zionism.
2. Anthony Eden (1897 - 1977) soldier, scholar and statesman. He was first elected to parliament as a Conservative M.P. in 1923, appointed under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in 1931, Lord Privy Seal in 1934, Minister for League of Nations Affairs in 1935 and in December of same year, Foreign Secretary. He resigned in 1938 in protest over Chamberlain's appeasement of Italy and Germany. He re-entered Government in September 1939 as Dominion Secretary, and became Foreign Secretary and served from end of 1940 until defeat of Conservatives in 1945. In 1951 he became Foreign Secretary once again and in 1955 succeeded Churchill to the Prime Ministership.
3. E. Kedourie, "Great Britain and Palestine: The Turning Point," Islam in the Modern World and Other Studies. (New York: Holt Rinehart, 1980), p. 116.
4. Michael J. Cohen, Palestine: Retreat from the Mandate (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1978), p. 33.
5. Kedourie, p. 110.
6. J.C. Hurewitz. The Struggle for Palestine 2nd ed. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1968), p. 78. According to Professor Hurewitz, Raghib Al-Nashashibi leader of his party, looked forward to high office within the projected Arab state.
7. By this treaty, ratified by Iraq on November 16, 1930, Britain recognized Iraq's independence with a promise to support her admission to the League of Nations. In return Iraq granted Britain military bases and agreed to British officers training the Iraqi army.
8. Founded in 1925, the Revisionists wanted to move away from the conciliatory line taken by the Zionist Executive in Palestine with respect to the British mandatory authority. They favoured a tougher more confrontational approach, the goal being to bring about a Jewish majority on both sides of the Jordan as quickly as possible. Since agricultural colonization was by its nature a slow process, the Revisionists favoured an industrial-urban strategy fed by mass immigration, even if it came at the expense of educational, and other social goals. To those ends they favoured middle class settlement and private initiative. The Revisionists were also very insistent that the Yishuv's defence be, as much as possible, in Jewish hands.

9. Vladimir Jabotinsky (1880 - 1940) was an orator, poet and Zionist leader. The Russian pogroms at the turn of century brought him into Jewish self defence work and after 1908 his growing affinity for a Zionist solution to the Jewish Question led to his journalistic efforts at communicating Zionist ideology to Jews and non-Jews. He was the driving force behind the idea to create a Jewish legion as part of the British war effort in the Middle East. For a time he was a member of the post war Zionist Commission as well as a key figure in organizing Jewish self defence units in 1920. In March 1921 Jabotinsky joined the Zionist Executive from which he resigned in 1923. His new party, the World Union of Zionist Revisionists, formed in 1925, made Paris its headquarters.
10. David Ben-Gurion (1886 - 1973) was a Zionist labour leader, statesman and first prime minister of Israel. He immigrated to Palestine in 1906 from his birthplace in Russian Poland. In the same year he joined Poale Zion and became a Labour Zionist activist. In 1913 he was elected to Poale Zion's Central Committee. In 1915 he was expelled from Palestine by the Turks; he went to Egypt and eventually the United States, where, in 1918 he enlisted in the Jewish Legion which was being raised to assist the Allied cause. Back in Palestine post-war, Ben-Gurion helped found Ahdut ha'avodah and the Histadrut (General Federation of Jewish Labour) He became its Secretary-General (1921 -1935). Until 1937, Ben Gurion was against making a Jewish state the basis of Zionist policy. From 1935 until the establishment of Israel in 1948, Ben Gurion served as Chairman of the Executive of the Jewish Agency in Palestine.
11. The meeting was a dinner party held in the home of Sir Archibald Sinclair, leader of the Liberal party. The guests included Churchill, Leo Amery, Clement Attlee, Josiah Wedgewood, Victor Cazalet, and James de Rothschild.
12. Gorny, p. 137.
13. Dov Hoz, "Note On The Report of the Royal Commission", July 16, 1937, p. 1. WG/PAL/125ii L.A.
14. Ibid., p. 16.
15. Arthur Creech-Jones (1891 - 1964) was a British Labour leader and sometime Cabinet member. Beginning as a trade union official, he entered Parliament in 1935 and served until shortly before his death. When the Labour party came to power in 1945 he was appointed Parliamentary Under-secretary of State to the Colonial Office; in October 1946, he became Colonial Secretary.
16. "Unravels the Palestine Tangle," Labour, August 1937, p. 290. WG/PAL/126 L.A.
17. Cmd. 5479. Policy in Palestine. Despatch dated 23rd December, 1937, from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to the High Commissioner for Palestine. January 1938. p.2.
18. Ibid., p. 11.
19. "The Palestine White Paper: Mr. Ormsby Gore's Despatch Analyzed," Zionist Review, January 1938, p.1.

19. "The Palestine White Paper: Mr. Ormsby Gore's Despatch Analyzed," Zionist Review, January 1938, p.1.
20. L. Bakstansky to J.S. Middleton, January 10, 1938. JSM/210/141 i L.A.
21. "Notes On A Policy For Palestine" circulated as an attachment to the minutes of the International Committee's Sub-Committee of the National Executive for January 28, 1938. WG/PAL/34i L.A.
22. Gorny, p. 144.
23. The announcement of the commission's creation was made by Eden in September 1937 while he was in attendance at League sessions discussing Palestine. The Commission takes its name from the man who became its chairman, Sir John Woodhead.
24. As part of the Cabinet's re-shaping of the terms of reference Ormsby-Gore and Eden struck a deal which could be construed as somewhat humiliating to the former. In exchange for Eden's agreement to wording which omitted any a priori willingness to abandon partition, Ormsby Gore had to promise Eden in writing that he would inform Sir John Woodhead that a public conclusion of impracticability vis a vis partition was permissible.
25. "Peel Commission," Encyclopedia of Zionism and Israel (New York: Herzl Press/McGraw Hill, 1971), p. 1229.

Chapter 5

Appeasement and The White Paper (1938 - 1939)

During 1938, the Jewish situation in Europe grew increasingly desperate, particularly after Hitler's successful Anschluss with Austria. The application of the Nuremberg Laws to Austria coupled with increasing anti-semitic manifestations in Rumania enlarged the pool of European Jews seeking to emigrate. British Labour M.P.s, true to their word, attacked the British Government for refusing to ease the restrictions on Jewish immigration into Palestine.

In a statement of policy issued in November 1938, His Majesty's Government accepted Woodhead's conclusion about the impracticability of partition. The statement then went on to affirm Britain's continued responsibility for the governing of the whole of Palestine while it undertook a search for alternative means to settle the problem as defined by Peel. To that end and in the belief that the sine qua non for a settlement required an Arab-Jewish understanding, the Government indicated its immediate intention

. . . to invite representatives of the Palestinian Arabs and of neighbouring states on the one hand and of the Jewish Agency on the other, to confer with them as soon as possible in London regarding future policy, including the question of immigration into Palestine. As regards the representation of the Palestinian Arabs, His Majesty's Government must reserve the right to refuse to receive those leaders whom they regard as responsible for the campaign of assassination and violence. . .

They [His Majesty's Government] attach great importance . . . to a decision being reached at an early date. Therefore, if the London discussions should not produce agreement within a reasonable period of time, they will take their own decision [emphasis added], in the light of their examination of the problem and of the discussions in London, and announce the policy which they propose to pursue.

The St. James Conference, as it came to be called, lasted from February 7 to March 17, 1939. The Arabs, refused to meet formally with Jewish delegates on the grounds that the Jewish Agency had no legal status in Palestine. There were, however, a few informal meetings attended by some of the Arab delegates. His Majesty's Government, in effect, hosted two parallel conferences, and negotiated with each side separately.

In doing so, the British found themselves between a rock and a hard place. On March 15, after five weeks of fruitless negotiating, the British presented both delegations with a set of final proposals in which H.M. Government declared its ultimate objective to be an independent state, either on a unitary or federal basis. A transitional process was envisioned without a specific end date; the hope was expressed that the process could be completed within ten years. Each phase of the transition was linked to increased consultation and cooperation between Jews, Arabs and the Mandatory. There were no dates for the transition stages. Jewish immigration was set at a maximum figure of 75,000 spread over the next five years. After that all further intake would be subject to Arab approval. The rate of that immigration was left to the discretion of the High Commissioner, who was to apply the principle of economic absorptive capacity. He was also given general powers to prohibit and regulate land transfers to Jews.

The Jewish delegation saw these proposals as a gross breach of the Balfour Declaration's commitment to a National Home. They promptly denounced them and in protest disbanded. The Arab delegates also rejected the proposals. Their chief aim, which had been forcefully enunciated on February 20, called for the creation of a sovereign Palestine. They demanded a statehood solution which would be "immediate, clear-cut and final."² The British offer held out only the promise of a state; there was no implementation schedule. In addition, the clause which read:

His Majesty's Government could not contemplate relinquishing all responsibility for the government of Palestine unless they were assured that the measure of agreement between the communities in Palestine was such as to make good government possible.³

was interpreted as a Jewish veto. The Arabs felt that their most cherished aspiration was being shelved, while Jewish immigration was to continue. Three years of resistance and rebellion had not yielded them much reward. The conference, which ended on the same day as Hitler's triumphal entry into Prague, left the Jews with a bleak portent of what the next British policy statement would likely contain. Growing awareness of Jewish helplessness in the face of Fascism combined with a perception that the St. James Conference had appreciably weakened the Jewish position in Palestine won for Jews increased sympathy and support in all major British parties. However, there were very few British political figures who were capable of synthesizing their humanitarian concern with a Jewish state solution.

In the eight weeks between the conference's end and the anticipated White Paper on Palestine, the Zionists, expecting it to embody the unacceptable proposals of March 15, did their utmost to prevent or delay its issuance. Their efforts were in vain and the Macdonald White Paper was made public on May 17, 1939. It reflected the view that the Jewish National Home had become well established and Britain's obligation was in that sense, completed. What remained was to secure the development of self-governing institutions in such a way that the vital interests of Arabs and Jews would be safeguarded; the period envisioned to accomplish this was ten years. There was to be provision for consultation with the League Council on the process of terminating the Mandate. Jewish immigration was to be limited to 75,000 in all categories and stretched over five years on the principle of economic absorptive capacity, after which any future influx would require Arab approval. All illegal immigration was to be deducted from the stated quotas. Land transfers to

Jews would henceforth be strictly regulated and in certain areas prohibited. The Arab response to the White Paper was mixed, but the naysayers predominated. No joint statement was issued by the Arab states. Of all the Arab delegations which attended the St. James Conference only two approved of the White Paper's thrust and tone. These were the Transjordanians and the National Defence Party of Palestine. The latter endorsed the document as a realistic vehicle for attaining a sovereign Palestine; they hoped that a new Arab-British cooperation might reduce the time needed for the transition to independence.

But in the quarter where it counted most, there was only negativism. The Arab Higher Committee of Palestine rejected the report on May 18. They followed up with a more detailed refutation on May 30. Their summation asserted that:

The Jewish National Home, the cause of all evil in the country is still recognized and it is further desired to confirm it and give it a "special position."

The continuance of Jewish immigration is ensured for five years under the administration . . . which . . . has brought upon the calamities an unhappy situation now existing in the country.

The possibility of land transfer has not been finally removed . . .⁴

The Arab Higher Committee's refutation ended on what, in view of what later transpired, might be termed an ironic note. The final paragraph entitled The Last Word insisted that:

In deciding the fate of a living nation, the last word does not rest with White or Black Papers; it is the will of the nation itself that decides its future.

Such a declamation would have found favour with most Zionists.

Jewish and particularly Zionist responses to MacDonald's White Paper were hostile. The British Government's policy of crystallizing the National Home and severely restricting its capacity to serve as a refuge for Jews brought down a torrent of criticism and censure including charges of appeasement, betrayal and criminal

immorality. Professor Yehuda Bauer has taken issue with the charge of appeasement if its users meant it in the total sense of English and French behaviour at Munich. There, the policy had been premised on the need to avoid war. In Palestine the situation was just the reverse and he argues that sometime before Hitler marched into Prague, the British government understood that war with the Axis was unavoidable, and therefore the White Paper became a means for securing vital British interests in the expectation of war. And as those interests, which included oil, bases, transport and communication routes, required regional stability, Britain was making timely concessions to keep the Arabs on its side. If Palestine was a significant cause of Arab alienation and regional destabilization, then concessions to the Arabs in Palestine were called for. The Yishuv, in such an analysis, had little to offer. The Jews in Palestine and throughout the world would, of necessity and by conviction, support Britain in the coming war. Their loyalty need not be courted; it could be taken for granted.

Within the military, a few key officers expressed doubts about the ultimate value of a pro-Arab policy. They held that the Arabs would behave themselves so long as Britain displayed strength and firmness of purpose. Should Britain falter they foresaw Arab insurrection, possibly in collusion with the Axis. Their advice was to arm and train the Yishuv as a more dependable ally. Orde Wingate, for one, supported such a Jewish oriented policy, but his opinion was not shared by the architects of the White Paper.⁵

The British Labour Party was quick to condemn the White Paper. At the party's Annual Conference (Southport, last week of May 1939) the chairman, Mr. George Dallas, made strong reference to Palestine in his opening address:

It is tragic at a time when racial persecution is hounding the Jews from country to country that the Government should close the door against them in Palestine. It appears to have little conception of the far-reaching consequences of Britain's

policy for twenty years in Palestine. It has repudiated the Balfour agreement, destroyed the hope of a Jewish National Home, offended Jewish influence in Europe and America, and turned into unwilling allies a people whose persecution has led them passionately to seek to help the democratic cause.⁶

Mrs. Barbara Gould, incoming chairman of the Labour Party, moved an emergency resolution on Palestine on behalf of the National Executive Committee. It endorsed the stand taken by the Parliamentary Labour Party against the Government's Statement of Policy on Palestine. Among other things it declared:

The policy of the White Paper represents a further surrender to aggression, places a premium on violence and terror, and is a setback to the progressive forces among both Arabs and Jews.⁷

The resolution ended with a call to rescind the White Paper and re-open Palestine for Jewish immigration on the basis of economic capacity. She warned that this policy of appeasement would fail in Palestine "just as it had failed in Europe." Mrs. Gould drew a parallel between Palestine and Spain whose struggles were seen as of the same order. Franco's victory was a triumph for reaction, privilege and tyranny over progress, equality and democracy. Substitute the Palestinian leader Haj Amin el Husseini and his following for Franco, and Palestine promised a repetition of Spain's tragic fate. Given such an analogy, how did Mrs. Gould account for the Arab masses intense opposition to the Jewish National Home? Her remarks drew on a thesis which many Zionists still believed, namely that Palestinian peasants and workers were unaware of their own real interests and had been betrayed by a reactionary and privileged politico-religious leadership. Thus the disturbances of 1920, 1921, 1929 and 1936-39 could be explained as part of a class struggle in which the Palestinian proletariat were pawns of the kinds of forces opposed to British Labour's most cherished values. Such an analysis continued to diminish the nationalist dimension of Arab political behaviour in Palestine. It permitted British Labour to persevere in its support for a continuation of the Mandate and its call for cancellation of the White

Paper whose passage according to Mr. Creech Jones M.P. "was a capitulation to violence."⁸

At the end of May, the Conservative Government asked for a vote of confidence on the White Paper. The Government majorities were exceptionally small. On the main motion for approval the vote was 268 to 179. No less than 116 Government members abstained and 81 of the 268 were generally considered opposed to the White Paper but unwilling to disobey a Three Line Whip. In a review of the voting pattern one analyst held that without a Three Line Whip 340 negative votes would have been cast.

Left alone and to the exercise of their vote in accordance with their innermost convictions, it is not unlikely that two-thirds of the House would have combined to refuse the Government leave to perpetuate yet another act of fruitless and demoralizing appeasement.⁹

This vote made it more difficult for the Colonial Secretary Malcolm Macdonald to appear before the Permanent Mandates Commission and claim that the White Paper enjoyed anything approaching broad support at Westminster. In late June, he flew to Geneva and there appealed for the Commission's understanding for the practical difficulties surrounding the governing of the Mandate. He pointed out the regional implications which flowed from the lack of a settlement. "The hostilities . . . threaten to become a cause of permanent unrest and friction throughout the Near and Middle East."¹⁰ The majority of the Commission's membership were unconvinced. They took the position in their advisory report to the League "that the policy set out in the White Paper was not in accordance with the interpretation which, in agreement with the Mandatory Power and the Council, the Commission had placed upon the Palestine Mandate."¹¹ Great Britain was prepared to argue her case before the Council of the League in September, but the war intervened and the powerful legal opinion created by the Mandates Commission was never tested. In the context of her war effort, Britain was able to interpret the Mandate as she chose.

At the end of July another parliamentary debate on policy for Palestine was triggered by a Colonial Office decree suspending Jewish immigration from October 1939 to March 1940. Labour M.P.s castigated the Government for this abhorrent follow-up to the White Paper. They reminded the Government that the permanent Mandates Commission had refused to approve of the White Paper's policy. Mr. Tom Williams, who opened the debate for the Labour Party argued that this immigration decree was the last straw, "it had no lawful, moral or ethical justification, and it ought to be withdrawn at once."¹² Mr. Duff Cooper, a Conservative, declared: "That the Secretary of State should have been driven to adopt such a measure was proof that the policy would not work."¹³

The 1939 White Paper remained in force throughout the war and after. With the exception of the Passfield White Paper successive British Governments had displayed a mostly positive attitude towards the growth of the Jewish National Home until mid-1936. Between 1936 and 1939 that attitude underwent a very perceptible reversal. By the eve of World War II, the promulgation of the White Paper was taken as firm evidence that Britain had essentially abandoned her Mandatory obligations. To Palestine Arabs, this policy shift did not go as far as they would have liked, consequently they held out for greater concessions. To most Jews, both Zionist and non-Zionist, it was interpreted as the end of a trust. This watershed in British-Zionist relations was overshadowed by the need to fight against a common enemy. Ben-Gurion urged the Yishuv to fight the White Paper as if there were no war and the war as if there were no White Paper. Most of the Yishuv agreed and so conducted themselves.

Notes

1. Cmd. 5893. Palestine: Statement by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, November 1938. p. 3-4.
2. Y. Bauer, From Diplomacy to Resistance - A History of Jewish Palestine 1939 - 1945. (Forge Village: Atheneum, 1970), p. 30.
3. Ibid., p. 39.
4. "Reply of the Arab Higher Committee For Palestine to the White Paper Issued By The British Government on May 17, 1939." pp. 14 - 15.
5. Orde Charles Wingate (1903 - 1944) was a British officer and Christian Zionist. In 1936 he was ordered to Palestine as an intelligence and security officer. He became intensely identified with the Zionist cause, and made a major contribution to the shaping of the Yishuv's military thinking and development with his leadership of the "Special Night Squads". His militant Zionism, at first somewhat suspect, ultimately won him enormous respect in the Yishuv.
6. "British Labour Condemns 'White Paper' Policy," Zionist Review, June 2, 1939. p. 6.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid., p. 7.
9. "The Palestine Vote in Parliament," Zionist Review, June 2, 1939. p. 5.
10. "Mr. MacDonald Defends White Paper at Geneva," Zionist Review, June 22, 1939. p. 6.
11. Hurewitz, p. 105.
12. "The Commons' Debate on Palestine," Zionist Review, July 27, 1939. p. 4.
13. Ibid., p. 5.

Chapter 6The War Years (1939 - 1945)

With the outbreak of World War Two, Zionist leaders were quick to issue formal statements of support for Britain's coming war effort. On August 29, 1939, Weizmann, in a letter to Prime Minister Chamberlain, offered to place the Jewish Agency's resources under Britain's coordinating hand. He held that winning the military struggle took priority over everything including 'political differences', his euphemism for the White Paper. On September 3, Ben-Gurion, on behalf of the Jewish Agency Executive issued an address to the Yishuv. He emphasized a three-fold concern: protection of the National Home, welfare of the Jewish people and victory of the British Empire. The White Paper was described as a 'great blow' but not one that would reduce the promise of a whole-hearted war effort. In adopting this position, the Jewish Agency leadership hoped that standing with Britain would be rewarded by an indefinite shelving of the White paper and its ultimate scrapping. In concrete terms Zionists hoped to use the time gained to expand the Yishuv's economic base, population and capacity for self-defence. Were these objectives to be successfully realized, then the Yishuv would be better positioned in any peace settlement. Chamberlain's private reply to Weizmann contained a most enigmatic line: "You will not expect me to say more at this stage than that your public-spirited assurances are welcome and will be kept in mind."¹

The offers of Yishuv support, however, did not affect the implementation of the White Paper. In October 1939, the Mandatory Government confirmed the Colonial Secretary's decision to suspend the immigration schedule from October 1939 to March 1940. In addition, the quasi-legal Jewish military force, Haganah, suffered the arrest

and sentencing of some of its members for utilizing light arms in an illegal infantry training exercise. The biggest blow of all came on February 28, 1940 when, with little warning to the Jewish Agency, the White Paper Land Transfer Regulations were issued. Palestine was divided into three zones. In approximately 64% of the country Arab land could not be sold to Jews. The reserved area included the hill country and parts of the Jaffa, Gaza and Beersheba sub-districts. In 5% of Palestine essentially most of the coastal plain from Greater Haifa to Greater Tel-Aviv transfers were unrestricted. For the remaining 31% a set of restrictions were set in place; Jews could buy land only from non-Palestine Arab owners. On April 18, 1940 this latter principle became operative in the prohibited zone as well.

Zionist leaders viewed these land regulations as particularly ominous, not so much in terms of their immediate needs, but rather for their projected requirements. A precedent such as this would stunt the growth of the Yishuv's economic and demographic base. Prior to the issuance of the Land Transfer Regulations, Weizmann, Moshe Shertok² and Berl Locker met twice with Attlee and Tom Williams of the Parliamentary Labour Party to discuss their concerns. Attlee promised to pressure the government and did make representations to Malcolm MacDonald, the Colonial Secretary, but the latter could not be moved. Attlee also spoke to Chamberlain and came away with an understanding that the regulations would be shelved. Hence the Bill's publication and submission to Parliament both surprised and angered Labour Party leaders, who had been telling Zionist leaders that the Bill would not appear on the Order Paper.

Labour took a rather unusual step in response; they introduced a no-confidence motion, something which they had not done when the larger issue of the White Paper was being debated. The government which had made sure that its members, including Winston Churchill, (now a member of the War Cabinet), would not break ranks on the

Bill, won the vote comfortably (292 to 129). During the debate preceding the vote, Labour M.P. Phillip Noel-Baker pointed to the plight of Polish Jews and referring pointedly to the Colonial Secretary said:

Does he still pretend that we can solve the problem by our cruel futilities about British Guiana and the West Indies, where in two bitter years we have not found safety for even 100 hunted Jews? He knows, as we know, there is one indispensable solution -- the Jewish National Home in Palestine and whatever else there may be there must be that as well.³

Zionist leaders were both impressed and confused by the British Labour Party's support for their cause. They had difficulty understanding how a party which could not yet be persuaded to include a pro-Zionist plank in its statement of post-war objectives, could display the kind of political courage it took to introduce a wartime Motion of Censure on the issue of land transfers. This was one good illustration of how Zionists were never quite able to come to a definitive sense of the British Labour Party's commitment to the objectives of mainstream Zionism.

The inclusion of the Labour Party in Churchill's coalition government, formed in May 1940, was generally well received among Zionists, but the more realistic among them warned that this should not be interpreted as meaning there would be a switch in British policy. Of the two Labour members in the War Cabinet, Attlee and Arthur Greenwood, only Greenwood was regarded as an unreserved friend.⁴ As to others in the Cabinet, Herbert Morrison was perceived as an opportunist⁵ while Ernest Bevin's position on Zionism was not all that clear. Bevin had been helpful in the past, particularly during the imbroglio over the Passfield White Paper, but his wartime position as Labour Minister did not bring him into much contact with the Palestine Question. However, on occasions when Zionist leaders were able to share their concerns with him, he tended to be friendly and even encouraging. In one instance Bevin went so far as to indicate how Jewish military strength could be enlarged beyond the level of Arab-Jewish parity, a principle then governing recruit-

ment. In a mid-October 1941 meeting with Dov Hoz and David Ben-Gurion, Bevin went so far as to suggest that rather than pursue the raising of a Jewish 'army', the Zionist leaders pursue the goal of autonomy or even full sovereignty.⁶ However, despite his seeming warmth to Labour Zionism and his stated admiration for its accomplishments, Bevin was cautious in public and refused to make any kind of explicit pledges.

The Zionist search for commitments from leading figures in both major British political parties took on added urgency after mid-1941. They were reacting to the publication of a speech by the Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden on May 29, 1941, whose remarks published as a White Paper (Cmd. 6289), carried the weight of a policy statement. In it he espoused "full support to any scheme [for Arab Unity] that commands general approval."⁷ This seemed to represent an alteration in official thinking as to how Britain could best be emplaced in the Arab world. Professor Hurewitz argues that Eden's support for Arab Unity was the visible sign of a policy shift first manifested by the invitation to Arab states to attend the 1939 London Conference on Palestine. He interprets the new policy as a reversal of direction, one that took Britain away from its traditionally successful approach of divide and rule.

By giving the independent Arab states a voice in Palestine affairs on the eve of the war Britain had embarked on a new course, designed to promote the unity of the Arab East by fostering the interest of the Sunni Arab majority, even at the expense of Christian, Jewish, Kurdish and Shi'ite minorities. This program aimed at the creation of a pro-British Arab bloc to check the growing pro-Axis feeling and to marshal the greatest possible support for the war effort.⁸

Eden's speech, following an earlier British commitment to Syrian and Lebanese independence, triggered Zionist concern that the Middle East was being politically redesigned without Jewish participation. The Colonial Office was approached by the Jewish Agency on this very question, and the Colonial Secretary replied that the

words "general approval" in Eden's speech also covered the rights of the Jews with regard to Palestine. This assurance did not sit well with the Jewish Agency; they were much aggrieved because British officials had not thought it necessary to contact them prior to Eden's speech and because the Colonial Secretary's assurances were given orally only after an enquiry. The Jewish Agency were coming to the conclusion that the political destiny of the Middle East was indeed being reshaped, as in 1917, without waiting for the war to end.

On July 10, 1941, Poale Zion addressed a lengthy memorandum to the Executive of the British Labour Party. It detailed Jewish Agency concerns for both the process of formulation and apparent direction of British policy for the Near East. The Foreign Secretary's May 29 speech was singled out as worrisome because there was "not a word about the special position of Palestine and the rights and interests of the Jewish people in it."⁹ The British Government was taken to task for the rigidity with which it was interpreting the legal immigration schedule as well as the spirit and manner in which it was reacting to illegal immigration. The Patria Affair of November 1940 was not mentioned by name,¹⁰ but it was certainly in the minds of those who framed the memorandum. On December 8, 1940, over 1,500 illegal refugees were deported to the Island of Mauritius. The British Government was also blamed for dragging its feet on the question of a Jewish Fighting Force serving under the Zionist flag, and for engaging in a conspiracy of silence on the subject of Jews qua Jews in the war effort. The memorandum asked rhetorically why and then proceeded to reply:

There is the desire not to incur obligations to the Jews by accepting, openly and unreservedly, their collective help in the war. There is the fear of doing anything which could be used for Axis propaganda among the Arabs. And this fear is being exploited by those whose chief concern, even at this very moment, seems to be to safeguard the White Paper policy.¹¹

The final sections reiterated the need for consultation with the Jewish Agency and then went on to warn that "advantages to be acquired by the Arabs . . . cannot be given them at the expense of the vital rights and interests of the Jewish people" whose needs were described in the familiar terms of sufficiency of territory and sovereignty. At the end the British Labour Party was thanked for its willingness to speak out in the past and asked to use all its influence and power to secure a line of action which would be "true to its traditional policy of friendship and understanding for the real interests of both the Jewish and Arab nations."

At approximately the same time as Poale Zion was making the aforementioned representation to the British Labour Party Executive, the Committee for Arab Affairs was pressing its views on the British Labour Party as well. In a memorandum entitled Our Responsibilities in Palestine, Maude Royden Shaw, the author, made it clear that the Arabs would never permit Jews to make an Arab country into a Jewish state. Of the Jewish tragedy unfolding in Europe she wrote:

The sufferings of the Jews have been and still are terrible. The cure for them will not be found in a little country, surrounded by a large area of deeply hostile Arabs. . . . It is our duty to . . . seek with the other United Nations for a place of places where Jewish refugees can go.¹²

In November 1941, Bevin's deputy, A. Creech Jones, submitted a very pro-Zionist memorandum to the Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions, in which he argued that the post-war Jewish refugee problem could best be solved through the creation of a sovereign Jewish state. To that end, and mindful of the history of the Jewish National Home, he urged that: "The White Paper policy . . . be abandoned and the Government . . . move to the establishment of an independent Jewish State."¹³ In December 1941 Professor Norman Bentwich wrote a critique of the Creech-Jones proposal.¹⁴ He pointed out that it was a previous Labour Government which had tried to restrict Jewish immigration and land purchase. He commented:

In my opinion the restrictions proposed were excessive; but the attitude of the Labour Government that Arabs must be protected against dispossession of land must be recognized . . . we must hope for a fresh approach to the problem at the end of the war: The White Paper of 1939, like earlier White Papers, would then be regarded as a dead letter . . . ¹⁵

Bentwich's principal criticism concerned Creech-Jones' premises that masses of Jewish refugees would be produced by the war, that those refugees would want to settle in the National Home or that Palestine would be able to absorb them. Finally he took issue with the necessity for a sovereign Jewish state. Bentwich argued that no one could predict Jewish survival rates, refugee numbers or settlement intentions. Should there prove to be a large number of non-repatriable Jews, then many countries should be prepared to absorb them. Bentwich prophesied that the demand for a state with its full control over immigration would set the clock back to the trouble and communal strife of 1936-39. Bentwich recommended, instead, that an undivided Palestine be prepared for entry into some kind of Near East confederation with Jews accorded the right to immigrate freely into any part thereof. He further suggested that Transjordan be combined with Palestine and Jewish settlement be freely permitted. He envisioned Palestine as a bi-national country with Jews and Arabs having equal political rights in respect of the central government. He called for a large measure of cantonal authority in areas overwhelmingly Arab or Jewish. And finally on the most sensitive topic of immigration, he urged that the absorptive capacity principle be re-employed, tied to a fixed percentage of the existing Jewish population, something in the order of seven per cent. He did not want the National Home to be crystallized at either the demographic or developmental levels; at the same time, he did not want Arabs to fear being swamped or displaced by the Yishuv.

In January 1942 the Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions circulated its Draft Report on Palestine. This draft which bore the name of T. Reid, a former

member of the Shaw Commission, was actually the product of the entire committee, which, after reviewing the history of the issue from the McMahon-Hussein correspondence on, took the position that "the promises made to Arabs and Zionist Jews as interpreted by them cannot be reconciled, as each side asserts inter alia that it has been promised a national state."¹⁶ The report called for granting self-government to an undivided Palestine after the war, in treaty relationship with Great Britain who would retain a special role in the matters of Palestine's defence and foreign relations until the establishment of some reliable system of international security. The report held that it was just to impose a reasonable restriction on Jewish immigration, although it did not specify how much was reasonable. The report also came out against certain Zionist economic practices -- particularly the emphasis on Hebrew labour and the non-alienation of Jewish National Fund land. It recommended that "there should be adequate restrictions on the sale of land to Jews to protect the Arabs from . . . economic domination." In its summary the committee asserted that:

The British people are generally not aware of the relevant facts in the Palestine problem . . . Arab, Briton and Jew have been placed in false positions in Palestine by unsound policies . . . these policies and their results should be terminated.

In a short critique, Bentwich argued against the committee's finding of inconsistency in British promises to Arabs and Jews during the Great War. More to the point he agreed with the draft's broad proposals but felt the emphasis on restriction should be altered to an emphasis on possibilities. Reid replied with a clause by clause refutation of Bentwich's analysis. He argued "my draft was an attempt to set before the Party obvious well known facts and induce them to reject propaganda and deal with the realities of the problem."¹⁷

On March 1, 1942 the Advisory Committee on Imperial Affairs circulated its guidelines for policy on Palestine. The report insisted that the policy rest on two principles:

1. . . . to do the least possible violence to the promises made and the least possible injustice to both Arabs and Jews.
2. . . . to establish a regime which will give time and opportunity for healing the breach and composing the differences between the two communities and which, when that has been accomplished, will make it possible for Jews and Arabs to cooperate peacefully in a self-governing Palestine.¹⁸

The document recognized the need to delay the granting of complete self-government because of the accumulated bitterness and hostility engendered by twenty years of communal conflict. It reasserted the need for Palestine's central government to rest in the hands of an impartial authority capable of holding the balance and doing justice to both sides. It then went on to affirm the validity of the Mandate System, but declined to mention which impartial authority was the most suited for the task.

. . . Palestine should for the time being be administered under a Mandatory appointed by and ultimately responsible to an International Authority."

The report was insistent on the necessity for an undivided Palestine. "Partition is a policy of despair and, under existing circumstances, is so desperate as to be almost inevitably disastrous." Until it was possible to work out an acceptable scheme for self-government, the report recommended appointing Arabs and Jews to positions of responsibility; it also called for the establishment of an elected Legislative Council without specifying what its powers should be. It also favoured the implementation of decentralized decision-making (local and regional authorities) as the best way of inducing communal cooperation. On the two most crucial questions, immigration and land purchase, the committee called for an approach which did minimal injustice to both communities, while offering "reasonable" restriction as the desirable operative principle.

Restrictions upon immigration may be defined as reasonable provided its sole purpose is to prevent the Arabs from being reduced to a minority and provided that the country can absorb

the immigrants economically . . . (as) to the land question . . . restrictions are only reasonable if they are in fact necessary to safeguard the Arab cultivator and small owner; they are not reasonable if their object is really to prevent Jews from acquiring land.¹⁹

The conclusion to be drawn from this report is that its authors had not been influenced by the events of the war. The document essentially reflected the Party's outlook as it was before the war. Nine months later, the report would, with two minor modifications, remain the Party's last word on policy for Palestine.

The interval between March and December, 1942, had, however, been marked by two very significant events. In the second week of May, 1942 an American Zionist Congress met in New York at the Biltmore Hotel. Nearly 600 delegates from seventeen foreign countries attended. Leading world Zionist figures, including Chaim Weizmann and David Ben-Gurion were present. The Conference, urged on by Ben-Gurion and Dr. Abba Hillel Silver, drew up an eight point declaration, the Biltmore Program, for American Zionism²⁰. The crucial points were contained in parts 6 and 8. Part 6 rejected the 1939 White Paper and called for Britain to fulfill the original purpose of the Balfour Declaration and the mandate which "was to afford . . . the opportunity, as stated by President Wilson, to form there a Jewish Commonwealth." Point 8 dealt with the need for a permanent solution to Jewish homelessness. It demanded that the "gates of Palestine be opened, that the Jewish Agency be vested with control over immigration . . . and that Palestine be established as a Jewish Commonwealth."²¹ American Zionism was openly pledging itself to work for the creation of a Jewish state. On November 10, 1942, the Biltmore Program was endorsed by a key Zionist body, the Inner Actions Committee of the World Zionist Organization.²² During 1943 and 1944 Zionist organizations all over the democratic world followed suit. In August 1945, the World Zionist Organization, meeting in London, would make the Biltmore Program official policy.

The year 1942 had also witnessed a growing sense of the magnitude of the Jewish tragedy unfolding in Nazi dominated Europe. However, neither the Biltmore Program nor the imperfectly perceived Final Solution had any appreciable impact on the makers of the guidelines for British Labour Party policy in Palestine. The December 1942 guidelines appeared under the aegis of the International Relations Sub-Committee. The document was nearly identical to the report of March 1. The additional elements included a call for a post-war self-governing Palestine to be offered Dominion status and a conclusion that, in the circumstances of the Mandate's history, Great Britain was best equipped to be the mandatory power.

But the war was affecting the Labour Party's public mood and was shifting it in the direction of an increasing identification with the Zionist cause. During June, 1943, the Labour Party's Annual Conference in London was presented with two resolutions on Palestine. The first, which focused on the plight of Jewish refugees but did not link their salvation to Palestine, was shunted aside in favour of a second which went further towards a commitment to Zionism than any public statement since the Party had urged Lloyd George to accept the Mandate. The motion, introduced by Maurice Rosette, the Poale Zion delegate, read:

It [the Conference] reaffirms the traditional policy of the Labour Party in favour of building Palestine as the [emphasis added] Jewish National Home.²³

Professor Gorny ascribed its enthusiastic acceptance to the immediate impact of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising (Spring, 1943) and a split over Palestine policy within the party leadership. In a protracted series of negotiations over the wording of Poale Zion's resolution, Labour pressed Poale Zion to accept phrasing which allowed for places other than Palestine to be available as a Jewish refuge. Poale Zion vigorously rejected such 'territorialism', and instead urged British Labour to come out fully in favour of a Jewish Commonwealth, instead of a Jewish National Home. The British

Labour Party demurred; it was still not ready to make a public commitment to a Jewish state because a portion of the leadership, including Clement Attlee, Herbert Morrison and Ernest Bevin, was of the opinion that a partitioned Palestine was not the most appropriate or sufficient solution to the Jewish Question. Another grouping including Phillip Noel-Baker, Harold Laski and Michael Walker of the T.U.C. disagreed;²⁴ they saw a Jewish state as the most just and practical solution. The 1943 resolution was a victory for the latter and Zionist leaders were pleased. Ben-Gurion, who recognized the resolution as a significant political event, was, however, very realistic about its value. Shortly after the Conference's end, he lectured his Mapai comrades:

A Conference's resolution is not an official guarantee that if this party comes to power, it will immediately implement it . . . this [British Labour Party] is a great party, perhaps the greatest. The fact that its parliamentary strength is limited is unimportant; it has a future, and perhaps not too far ahead.²⁵

A year later the British Labour Party would make its ultimate commitment to Zionism. In the 1944 National Executive Committee Report to the Annual Conference, which was again held in London, the section on Palestine went further than any Zionist would have thought possible.

. . . there is surely neither hope nor meaning in a 'Jewish National Home' unless we are prepared to let Jews, if they wish, enter this tiny land in such numbers as to become a majority. . . . In Palestine surely is a case, on human grounds, and to promote a stable settlement, for transfer of population. Let the Arabs be encouraged to move out as the Jews move in. Let them be compensated handsomely for their land . . . settlement elsewhere be carefully organized and generously financed. The Arabs have many wide territories of their own; they must not claim to exclude the Jews from this small area of Palestine . . . we should re-examine the possibility of extending the present Palestinian boundaries by agreement with Egypt, Syria or Transjordan. Moreover, we should seek to win the full sympathy and support both of the American and Russian Governments for the execution of this Palestinian policy.²⁶

The main author of the document, and of its most explicit pro-Zionist stance was the

Labour M.P. Hugh Dalton, a former deputy of Arthur Henderson's in the second Labour Government and by the middle thirties a convinced pro-partitionist.²⁷ In his memoirs he revealed the reasons which had moved him to formulate the clause.

. . . I had been trying to think out this whole problem afresh, in the light of its urgency and the horror of the Hitlerite atrocities. These seemed to me to have destroyed the case for any limitation . . . on Jewish immigration . . . nor did the old formula of "absorptive capacity" . . . seem to me to have any meaning in this new situation. We were at a point of sharp discontinuity in world history. Given sufficient capital . . . planning . . . talents . . . fanatical faith of the Jews, I was sure that Palestine could become a most successful, populous and predominately Jewish state . . . There must be large shifts of population, of Jews into Palestine, and of Arabs, out of it. We must put massive resources . . . finance . . . technical advice behind these shifts, so that material developments, for the benefit of all might follow quickly.²⁸

The Palestine clause, drafted in January 1944, was circulated and debated over the next ten months. Those who feared its implications, such as the then Colonial Secretary, Oliver Stanley, tried to get Dalton to water it down. He remained adamant and the young guard who agreed with him combined to steer it through the requisite Party channels so that it emerged more or less intact as part of the National Executive Committee's report to the Annual Conference. In the period between January and December Dalton explained to those who needed an explanation the rationale for the clause:

This declaration was perhaps, more sharply etched than previous Labour Party declarations on Palestine, and pulled out some implications more abruptly. But there was no discontinuity in our declarations.²⁹

Dalton had extrapolated Labour's stand on the White Paper and the Land Transfer Ordinance into approval of Jewish statehood. This assertion of continuity was not accepted by those Labourites who were in favour of nothing more than a Jewish National Home in a unified Palestine. What was more amazing was the criticism that came from the beneficiaries -- the Zionist advocates of statehood. Apparently

Dalton had chosen not to include the Zionists in the formulation of the Palestine clause and its content took them somewhat by surprise. The commitment to statehood was most gratifying, but the segment on population transfer was problematic, to say the least. The idea of transferring Arabs frightened many Zionists because it was based on a logic which held that room for one community had to be at the demographic expense of the other. This ran counter to decades of Zionist public insistence that Arabs and Jews could live together in a Jewish state. This did not mean that Zionist circles disapproved of transfer; but they did not want it on paper and particularly in a formulation that appeared coercive. However, the entire clause, having been published, was so valuable to the Zionist cause, that no attempt was made to alter the transfer segment. It was handled in public forums by an explanation of transfer as a voluntary movement. The Zionists intended to squeeze maximal political advantage from this commitment by the British Labour Party, particularly since there were rumours that the coalition government was considering a revival of a partition scheme.³⁰ Thus by the beginning of 1945 the British Labour Party's identification with Jewish suffering and Zionist aspirations reached its highest point. The Party's goodwill and commitment then became focused on two objectives: persuading His Majesty's Government to lift the White Paper, or at least to nullify the immigration clauses; and convincing the Cabinet's Sub-Committee on Palestine (appointed in April 1943 and chaired by the pro-Zionist, Herbert Morrison) that the time had come to decide in favour of a Jewish state. On April 25, 1945, Labour's National Executive Committee affirmed its resolution of December 1944 and called on the Government:

... to remove the present unjustifiable barriers on immigration and to announce without delay proposals for the future of Palestine in which it has the full sympathy and support of the American and Russian Governments.³¹

It is worth noting that both resolutions stressed the need for an active American and

Soviet involvement. The December 1944 resolution spoke of the necessity of winning Great Power support; the April 1945 statement treated that support as a condition for a successful solution. The same two themes, free Jewish immigration and Great Power involvement formed the core of Dalton's remarks on Palestine to Party delegates at the May 1945 Annual Conference at Blackpool.

We are quite clear in our declaration. We consider Jewish immigration into Palestine should be permitted without the present limitations which obstruct it, and we also have stated that this is not a matter which should be regarded as one for which the British Government alone should take responsibility . . . it is indispensable that there should be close agreement and cooperation among the British, American and Soviet Governments, particularly if we are going to get a sure settlement in Palestine . . . in my view steps should be taken in consultation with these two Governments to see whether we cannot get that common support for a policy which will give us a happy, a free and prosperous Jewish State in Palestine.³²

Unless Dalton was being careless, which was highly unlikely, his use of the expression Jewish State in Palestine signalled a shift away from the December 1944 wording and a move back towards some sort of partition. All mention of population transfers disappeared as well. Most Zionist and pro-Zionist circles felt that overall their cause had been considerably strengthened by the cumulative weight of the British Labour Party's wartime resolutions.

The election of the British Labour Party to office in early July 1945 elicited a wide spectrum of response from the partisans of Zionism. A minority were skeptical; the majority guardedly optimistic; some euphoric. In a special election supplement, the Zionist Review reflected the majority's hope that British Labour in government would sponsor a Jewish state.

Labour is pledged to the policy of a Jewish majority and a Jewish State. We sincerely trust that it will carry out to the full the promises made to the Jewish people by successive conferences in the course of more than a quarter of a century.³³

Those who expected Labour's election to lead to a quick victory for Zionism had lost

sight of the fact that a Party in opposition often behaves differently when it comes into power. In any case, no Annual Conference resolution was capable of binding a Labour Government.³⁴ As far back as June 1943, Ben-Gurion in a speech to colleagues from his own party (Mapai) in Palestine warned them that British Labour Party commitments via resolution should not be regarded as promissory notes which would be collectible upon Labour's becoming the government.³⁵

Notes

1. Hurewitz, p. 124.
2. Moshe Shertok (1894 - 1965), surname later Hebraicized to Sharett was a Zionist leader and Israeli statesman. During the Great War he volunteered to serve in the Turkish Army. At war's end he served on the Zionist Commission as Secretary for Land and Arab Affairs. In the early '20's he studied at the London School of Economics, became active in British Poale Zion which he represented at annual British Labour Party Conferences from 1920 to 1925. In 1925 he became assistant editor of the Histadrut's newspaper Davar. In 1931 he became secretary of the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, and in 1933, its head. During World War II he persuaded the British to arm and train Jews for resistance should Palestine be occupied. He also urged parachuting Palestinian Jews into the Balkans to organize Jewish resistance groups. He was a fervid opponent of the White Paper and a leading figure in the struggle to have it abrogated.
3. Gorny, p. 117.
4. Arthur Greenwood (1880 - 1954) lecturer in politics, Labour Party intellectual. At age 20 became secretary of the party's research department. He became an M.P. in 1922 and remained so until 1954. In 1924 he became Minister of Health and served in that role again in 1929. In 1929 he was elected Deputy Party Leader. Other offices held: 1935 - Party Treasurer 1940 to 42 - member of the cabinet without portfolio, 1945 - Lord Privy Seal, 1945 to 47 - Postmaster General.
5. Herbert Morrison, later Lord Morrison (1888 - 1965) Labour M.P. 1923 - 24, 1929 - 31, 1935 - 1959. Offices held included Minister of Transport (1929 - 45), Minister of Supply (1940), Home Secretary (1940 - 41), Lord President of the Council, leader of the House and Deputy Prime Minister 1945 - 51. Cited in Gorny, p. 168.
6. Gorny, p. 169.
7. Hurewitz, p. 117.
8. Ibid.
9. "The Jewish People and Palestine," Poale Zion, July 10, 1941. p. 1.
10. The S.S. Patria was designated as a deportation vessel for 1,771 illegal immigrants destined to be interned in Mauritius for the duration of the war. Explosives smuggled aboard for the purpose of crippling the ship were too effective. The Patria sank with a loss of almost 250 lives. The survivors were permitted to stay in Palestine "as an exceptional act of mercy".
11. "The Jewish People and Palestine," Poale Zion, July 10, 1941. p. 3.

12. M.R. Shaw "Our Responsibilities In Palestine" issued by the Committee for Arab Affairs, undated. L.A.
13. A. Creech Jones M.P. to Advisory Committee on Imperial Questions. "Palestine" No. 238. November 1941. L.A.
14. Professor Norman Bentwich (1883 - 1971) was a lawyer and Zionist partisan. He held the post of Attorney General in Palestine 1920 - 1931. In the mid-thirties he became active in rescue work involving first German, and later European Jewry.
15. Professor Norman Bentwich to the Advisory Committee on Imperial Affairs on the contents of Creech Jones' Memorandum No. 238. Supplementary Note No. 238a. December 1941. p. 1 L.A.
16. T. Reid "Draft Report on Palestine" No. 238b, January 1942. p. 3. L.A.
17. Letter from T. Reid to L. Woolf containing his reply to Bentwich's letter regarding Memorandum No. 238b January 17, 1942. p. 3.
18. Leonard S. Woolf for the Advisory Committee on Imperial Affairs. "Draft Report on Palestine" No. 238c. p. 1. L.A.
19. Ibid., p.3.
20. Abba Hillel Silver (1893 - 1963) Reform rabbi, and fiery American Zionist leader. He represented American Zionism at World Zionist gatherings. He was founder and co-chairman (1938 - 44) of the United Jewish Appeal and president (1938 -43) of the United Palestine Appeal. He was an activist who believed that Zionist diplomacy needed a substantial assist from public pressure to achieve its aims. His ability to organize such pressure and his commitment to a Jewish state marked him out as a militant.
21. Raphael Patai (ed.), Encyclopedia of Zionism and Israel (New York: Herzl Press/McGraw Hill, 1971), p. 139.
22. The Inner Actions Committee of the World Zionist Organization was the name given to that part of the Executive which made its home in Palestine.
23. "Labour Party And The Jewish Problem," Zionist Review Special Election Supplement, July 27, 1945.
24. Harold Laski (1893 - 1950). Teacher, philosopher and Labour Party intellectual. While teaching at Harvard 1914 - 1916 evolved close friendships with Judges O.W. Holmes, L.D. Brandeis and Professor F. Frankfurter. Laski served on the Executive Committee of Fabian Society 1921 - 1936 and the N.E.C. 1936 -1949. In 1945 he became Chairman of the Labour Party.
25. Gorny, p. 177.
26. Report of the National Executive Committee to the Annual Labor Conference. p. 9.

27. Hugh Dalton (1887 - 1962) Lawyer, Labour politician, and lecturer in economics. He became a Labour M.P. in 1924, served as Parliamentary Under-Secretary to Arthur Henderson in 1929 - 31. Among offices held were: Minister of Economic Warfare - 1940; President, Board of Trade - 1942; Chancellor of the Exchequer - 1945 to 1947.
28. H. Dalton, Memoirs 1931 - 1945. The Fateful Years (London: Frederick Muller, 1957), pp. 426 - 427.
29. Ibid.
30. Michael J. Cohen, Churchill and the Jews (London, Frank Cass, 1985), pp. 254-258.
31. "British Labour's Pledge," Zionist Review, September 28, 1945.
32. Ibid.
33. Zionist Review, July 27, 1945.
34. Since the new constitution was accepted in 1918 there had been a lively debate inside the party over the role of the Annual Conferences and their ability to 'bind' the Parliamentary Labour Party. During the twenties and until the Labour Government fell apart in 1931, the Parliamentary Party did more or less what it wanted. After 1931 the Parliamentary Labour Party was more 'attentive' to the resolutions of the Annual Conference, but still given the leeway to determine with respect to Parliament the timing of its actions on resolutions.
35. Gorny, p. 77.

Chapter 7

Search for Policy (1945 - 1946)

On July 5, 1945, the British electorate gave the Labour Party a solid mandate to govern. The caretaker Conservatives did not have much to offer the voter beyond Churchill's charisma and the afterglow of victory in Europe. The voters preferred the promise of economic and social change embedded in Labour's projected Welfare State.¹ This was reflected during the electoral struggle which focused overwhelmingly on domestic concerns.

. . . the mass of the electorate . . . showed no interest in anything outside the British Isles. The war with Japan, foreign policy, relations with U.S.A., the Dominions, Palestine and India were not election issues.²

During the war, had Labour evolved very substantial commitments to the specific reordering of the nation's economic and social structures. Participation in the wartime government wedded to electoral victory gave the party the self confidence it needed to begin implementing its program. The key element was, of course, the economy which in mid 1945 presented a very bleak picture. Almost six years of conflict had produced a large decline in domestic capital, a massive increase in domestic and foreign debt and a very substantial falling off in exports. The situation was aggravated by the abrupt withdrawal immediately after VE Day of sorely needed American Lend-Lease supplies. The end of the war in Europe also found Britain still saddled with a substantial military commitment in Asia; Japan, as yet had shown no inclination towards surrender. This made it impossible for the government to calculate the social and physical costs yet to come.

Clement Attlee, the new Prime Minister, put the Foreign Office into the battlehardened hands of Ernest Bevin, who had emerged from the war with enhanced

prestige, the product of his work as Minister of Labour and National Service in Churchill's wartime cabinet (1941 - 1945). He had been a good choice, particularly since his ministerial activities were largely an extension of his earlier work in labour negotiations. His wartime post put added demands on his health which had not been good; in fact he had considered retiring in 1938 for that very reason. But the war intervened and Churchill's call was not to be refused.

Between a newly pacified Europe and the war still raging in Asia, lay the geographically vast and socially diverse Middle East, a region of vital consequence for Britain and the British Empire, as noted by a cabinet committee in September 1945:

It [the Middle East] forms the modal point in the system of communications, by land, sea and air, which links Great Britain with India, Australia and the Far East; it is also the Empire's main reservoir of mineral oil. It contains the area of the Suez Canal and its terminal ports; our main naval base in the Eastern Mediterranean at Alexandria; the oilfields in Iraq and Southern Persia, the port and installations at Abadan, the pipe-line from Northern Iraq to Haifa and the port and the installations at Haifa itself; and the whole line of communications by land and air running from the Mediterranean sea-board through Palestine, Transjordan and Iraq to the Persian Gulf.³

Imperial and Commonwealth troops in Egypt and the Sudan provided security for the Suez Canal while H.M. Forces in Iraq, Kuwait, the Emirates and Aden did the same for the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. Transjordan's military were British trained, led, supplied and payrolled, while Palestine evidenced a substantial British military presence.

The second World War, like the first, had stimulated the growth of nationalism all over the globe. Britain's new Labour government was well aware of that fact particularly with respect to Burma, India, Egypt and Palestine. Their peoples showed little understanding of or concern for Britain's situation in mid-1945 and their nationalist movements were largely unsympathetic to any thinking which subordin-

ated their own aspirations to Britain's needs. In an analysis of the forces which would ultimately shape post-war foreign (and imperial) policies, George Orwell posited that the Labour government would, of necessity, have to play the hand left by its predecessor, particularly since Labour's leaders had helped to frame those policies during the war, or at least concurred in them. He argued:

A Labour government has not the same motive as a Conservative one for automatically backing reaction everywhere, but its first consideration must be to guard British strategic interests.⁴

Orwell was apparently 'out of touch' with the Labour Party's commitment to decolonization as demonstrated by the withdrawal from Burma and India.

The first post-war act of British decolonization took place in Burma, and the experiences gained there influenced the government's thinking and behaviour in respect of India, Egypt and Palestine. The departure from Burma taught Attlee a number of lessons: these included the need to identify accurately the popular national elements, to work out a scheme for the transfer of power, and to devise and implement a departure schedule. To prepare for Britain's departure from India, Attlee chose Louis Mountbatten as Viceroy. Mountbatten had earlier impressed Attlee by the quality of his wartime leadership and the soundness of his advice with respect to leaving Burma. Attlee had become convinced that had he followed Mountbatten's advice rather than that of the British Governor and the Colonial Office, leaving Burma would have proved less difficult, and Burma might have remained in the Commonwealth. When Mountbatten arrived in India on March 20, 1947, it was clear to him that the two major nationalist groupings, the Indian Congress Party and Muslim League, were not going to be able to accept a unified India. Partition then became the only feasible alternative, and once Attlee accepted that reality, he pressed his cabinet to fix an early date for Britain's withdrawal. Attlee wanted Hindus and Muslims to understand that Britain was deadly serious about leaving; this was to be no ploy whereby a looming civil war would induce the

warring parties to ask Britain to remain. With a firm timetable for departure, but without an agreement on boundaries, the British withdrew in good order and in so doing maintained the goodwill and respect of both communities.

It might be argued that the problem confronting Britain in Palestine was much the same as that she faced in India -- two national communities -- in this case, one Arab, one Jewish -- bent upon self-determination within a shared territory. But the parallel would be essentially false. In India, the British were free to do what they wanted; the 'jewel' in the Crown was a British preserve. Palestine, on the other hand, was a Mandate, a special trust for which Britain had been accountable to the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations. Palestine had also become a cause celebre among significant portions of the Arab and Islamic worlds. With respect to how the new Labour Government might deal with Palestine, Orwell wrote:

The one part of the world outside Britain in which the Labour government's policy may [emphasis added] diverge from that of its predecessor is Palestine. The Labour Party is firmly committed to the establishment of the Jewish National Home, and indeed almost all shades of radical opinion in England are 'pro-Jewish' on the Palestine issue. I think it would be rash, however, to assume that the Labour government will live up to the promises it made when it was in opposition. Left-wing opinion in England is pro-Jewish partly because the Arab case gets no hearing and it is not always realized that the colored peoples almost everywhere are pro-Arab. Unreserved support of the Jews might have repercussions in the other Arab countries, in Egypt and even in India, of a kind that a newly elected government could hardly be expected to face.⁵

The British Labour Cabinet was formed in July, 1945; Zionists and Arabs studied the new appointments with greater intensity than diviners examining entrails. There was disappointment in the Zionist camp when G.H. Hall, Deputy Colonial Secretary in Churchill's last cabinet was named Colonial Secretary; they would have preferred the 'friendlier' face of Creech-Jones, who became Hall's deputy, and in October 1946 his successor. In August Zionist energies were directed primarily at getting the British government to abandon existing immigration restrictions, and while doing so, they

became concerned at an unexpected and most unwelcome development -- the apparently deliberate diminution of their access to key Ministers such as Bevin and Morrison.⁶

On August 22, 1945, Prime Minister Attlee, appointed a new Cabinet Committee on Palestine. Chaired by Herbert Morrison, it was requested to draw up, in the briefest time possible, a short term Palestine policy. This was done and brought before Cabinet on September 8. The urgency was motivated by three factors: the pre 1945 election promise to rescind the 1939 White Paper, the need to give the contending parties a sense that the government was grappling with the problem and the requirement for a bridge between the imminent expiry of the White Paper immigration quotas and the creation of a long term policy. There were still 3,000 immigration certificates remaining out of the White Paper's original 75,000; they would be used up by the end of December 1945 and after that date, according to the White Paper, any further legal Jewish immigration could take place only with Arab acquiescence. The Committee recommended that H.M.G. continue to conform to the immigration arrangements as laid down by the White Paper. They also recommended that should His Majesty's Government find it impossible to accept total cessation, that an expedient involving a quota extension of 1,500 per month be employed until a new long-term policy was in place. The Committee reasoned that:

. . . the continuance of immigration during this period is of more importance when viewed as a measure designed to appease Jewish sentiment in the matter than when viewed as a genuine contribution to the solution of the real problem of World Jewry.⁷

Whatever the cabinet's decision, the committee recognized that the Arabs would have to be 'consulted', at least for the sake of form. The committee pointed out that the Arabs who really mattered were not the Palestinians, as laid down by the White Paper, but those of the Arab League. At war's end, the Arab league position was quite clear. With respect to immigration and land purchase they stood four square on

the White Paper -- the very document which most of them had rejected in 1939. The Arab Bureau in London informed the new Labour Government they would encounter enormous opposition if they tried to bring about a Jewish state in Palestine and warned that such an act "would cause the utmost prejudice to Anglo-Arab relations."⁸ The legacy of Arab state intervention allowed by Eden and Ormsby-Gore in the late thirties thus became part of Bevin's inheritance. The Palestine Committee also recommended that the Americans be informed of the substance of the short-term approach and the urgency of the search for a long-term policy.

The decision to keep the Americans informed reflected a view which held that American involvement should be aligned with British purposes in Palestine. Well before the war ended, Zionists had recognized that power was shifting within the Grand Alliance. That fact coinciding with an increased growth of American economic and strategic interests in the Middle East made it more imperative than ever to Zionists that the United States be enlisted in their cause. His Majesty's Government was not unwilling to accept American political, economic and military assistance with respect to Palestine. However, Britain did not welcome an increased American presence in the rest of the region, particularly if it came at the expense of British interests. The new American president, Harry Truman, forwarded to Attlee the Harrison Report on the situation of non-repatriable European Jews, and requested that as many of them as possible be allowed to enter Palestine.⁹ The British agreed on condition that the United States share responsibility for the consequences, including the provision of American troops to keep the peace. Truman vetoed participation on that basis and the British press had a field day pointing out that talk was cheap.

Before September had run its course, the Zionist camp displayed growing anxiety about what policy line the Labour Government intended to follow. On September 27, Poale Zion issued a statement of concern:

... although the Labour Government has been in office for two months, the White Paper for Palestine, which the Labour Party has condemned as a breach of faith, still remains in force. . . . The Jewish Labour Movement and the whole Jewish people would regard it as a tragedy if the Labour Government were now to go back on the declared policy of the Labour Party.¹⁰

The Zionist Review on September 28, published an article boldly headlined "British Labour's Pledge", 'Now Is The Time For Action.' It contained a reprint of every British Labour resolution on Palestine from 1940 to 1945. Statements favourable to the Zionist case, particularly those uttered by British Labour personalities with seats in the new Cabinet, were prominently featured. At the beginning of October, the British Labour party became the recipient of a well orchestrated Zionist inspired write-in campaign. Letters from individuals, cooperative societies, trade unions and most important of all, district Labour Party Organizations poured into Labour's headquarters at Transport House. The following constitute a representative selection.¹¹

From a student group at Oxford University:

We cannot bring ourselves to believe that the Party, now that it is in power is going to repudiate those pledges.

From a cooperative society:

We cannot believe that the Labour Government will, committed as it is by numerous resolutions of the Labour Party . . . go back on the pledges made to the Jewish people.

From a Divisional Labour Party:

This Executive Committee of the Kidderminster D.L.P. urges the Government to abrogate the White Paper on the settlement of Jews in Palestine thereby carrying into effect their condemnation of this paper.

Foreign socialist and Labour groups added their voices to the swelling chorus.

William Green, president of the American Federation of Labour cabled:

... in the name of common justice and Labour solidarity . . . admit 100,000 Jews into Palestine from the displaced persons camps in Europe, also recommend the abolition of the White Paper of 1939.

In the first week of October, the Executive of the Jewish Agency convened in Jerusalem in extraordinary conference. In an atmosphere of repressed tension, they were told:

The Yishuv has learned with grave apprehension the disturbing reports [in the English press] that the British Government is considering a plan relating to Palestine, based on the White Paper of 1939, including drastic restrictions on immigration. . . . The failure to open the gates of Palestine is tantamount to a death sentence upon the Jewish survivors . . . let the White Paper be annulled . . . let the gates of Palestine be thrown open to large scale immigration. The Yishuv declares that it will oppose the White Paper policy with all its might and will never accept its decrees.¹²

On October 4 the British cabinet discussed Truman's appeal for the immediate entry of 100,000 Jewish refugees into Palestine. Attlee insisted that the Americans had not grasped the enormity of such a request and lacked an appreciation of the difficulties attendant upon such a move. The cabinet itself was divided; Attlee and Bevin were opposed to meeting the request, but they lacked unanimous backing at the table. At a propitious moment, Bevin introduced an outline for a fresh approach which he just happened to have brought with him. Prefaced by the remark that a long-term solution to Palestine should be shared with the United Nations Organization, as successor to the League, he argued that the immediate situation might be served best by creating some sort of Anglo-American Parliamentary Commission which could be charged with examining how the Jewish situation in Europe could be ameliorated, how much immigration Palestine could reasonably absorb in the short-term and to what extent other countries, including the United States and the Dominions, could contribute by absorbing Jewish immigrants. His proposed Commission's terms of reference were sufficiently well drafted as to indicate that they were not ad hoc proposals. In addition, Bevin wanted the commission to be instructed:

... to consult the Arabs and the Jews jointly, both with regard to the proposals for immigration into Palestine in the immediate future, with a view to the submission of recommendations to the Governments concerned, and with regard to the problem of a long-term policy, with a view to making recommendations to the United Nations Organization.¹³

If Palestine realities didn't quieten American voices, then perhaps future criticism would be accompanied by cash and troops. In essence, the commission was Bevin's way of forcing Truman's hand.

On October 5 Poale Zion met with a half dozen members of British Labour's National Executive Committee.¹⁴ The meeting had been requested by the Zionists who began by expressing dismay at the Mandatory government's 'dedicated' enforcement of immigration and land laws. Mr. Shertok spoke of how the joy of many Jews at Labour's election victory had changed into gloom. He indicated he could not understand why the Labour government could not carry out its own resolution of April 1945. Shertok pointed out that the pressure being exerted by the Arab League was substantially a consequence of earlier British behaviour. He emphasized that the "building up of the Arab League had not started with Eden's declaration during the war but at the Conference in London of the Arab States in 1939. The Jews had warned Malcolm MacDonald that Great Britain was organizing pressure against herself."¹⁵ He went on to say:

Naturally the Arabs want to keep Palestine for themselves, but it is not for them a matter of life and death, as it is for the Jews; it is their [the Jews'] only chance of collective rehabilitation.

When queried about Poale Zion's minimal conditions, the delegation requested a first instalment of 100,000 immigration certificates. The National Executive Committee also asked the Zionists for an assessment of neighbouring Arab states' intentions and the possibility of their military intervention. At meeting's end Harold Laski reviewed the Zionist requests. These included: abrogation of the Land Law; 100,000

immigration certificates; a long term policy arrived at by British consultation with the appropriate Jewish organizations and ultimate approval of that policy by the new United Nations Organization. On October 22, 1945, the members which had met with Poale Zion were received by Prime Minister Attlee, Foreign Secretary Bevin and Colonial Secretary Hall. Laski emphasized that the National Executive Committee was anxious to act in harmony with the Government, which, he asserted meant carrying out Labour's promise to abrogate the White Paper, relieving Jewish suffering in Europe and improving development prospects throughout the entire Middle East. Attlee, without revealing any details, told Laski that the coming proposals would be built upon "the abrogation of the White Paper; that he and his colleagues agreed with the Party decisions that they could not stand; and that the purpose of their proposals would be the fulfillment of the Mandate, the principles of which the Labour Party had always supported."¹⁶

Upon receipt of Bevin's proposals for an Anglo-American Enquiry, Truman expressed displeasure. He regarded the whole drawn out process as a delaying tactic, and the non-Palestine foci did not sit well. Nevertheless, with reservations for the record, the United States accepted Bevin's invitation and the Foreign Secretary so informed the Cabinet on the morning of October 13. In the afternoon of the same day the House was given the precise terms of reference for the Anglo-American Commission of Enquiry (A.A.C). These included calls to:

1. examine the political, economic and social conditions of Palestine as they bear upon the problem of Jewish immigration and settlement therein and the well-being of the peoples now living therein.
2. examine . . . position of Jews in Europe . . . practical measures . . . to be taken in those countries to enable them to live free from discrimination and oppression and to make estimates of those who wish or will be impelled by their conditions to migrate to Palestine or other countries of Europe.

3. hear views . . . competent witnesses . . . representative Arabs and Jews on the problems of Palestine . . . to make recommendations . . . for ad interim handling . . . as well as for their permanent solution.¹⁷

Bevin spoke with great sensitivity of the suffering endured by Jews at the hands of Naziism; in reference to their situation on the European continent he said:

The Jewish problem is a great human one. We cannot accept the view that the Jews should be driven out of Europe, and should not be permitted to live again in these countries without discrimination, and contribute their ability and their talent towards rebuilding the prosperity of Europe.¹⁸

He then turned to the demands for large-scale immigration into Palestine, which he held might make a contribution, but could not, by itself, be the solution. He went on to discuss the dual obligation created by the wording of the Mandate, and after surveying its entire history emphatically asserted that it had become impossible to find common ground between the Arabs and Jews. Near the end of his speech he compared the claims of the two communities to the same land:

. . . one on the ground of a millenium of occupation, and the other on the ground of historic association, coupled with the undertaking given in the First World War to establish a Jewish Home.¹⁹

For Zionists the months of waiting had produced what David Ben-Gurion, then in London, called a 'sad disappointment'. In analyzing Mr. Bevin's speech, the Chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive recognized that the Labour Government was the inheritor of twenty years of indecisive handling of the Mandate. He welcomed the implication that the Government did not feel itself bound to the 1939 White Paper and the statement that "H.M. Government cannot divest themselves of their duties and responsibilities under the Mandate while the Mandate continues."²⁰ He expressed appreciation for:

. . . the willingness of the United States to take a direct share in the solution of the twin problems of the Jewish people and

Palestine, though according to Washington the American government does not support the continuation of the White Paper in the interim, pending the enquiry and insists on the admission of the first hundred thousand Jews from Europe.²¹

His most salient criticism was aimed at Bevin's thinking. Ben-Gurion faulted the Foreign Secretary for his lack of understanding of two basic elements: the nature of the Jewish question and the obligation of the Mandate. Bevin's statement appeared to reduce the 'Jewish problem' to that of World War II survivors and Palestine to a part, preferably small, in their resettlement. Ben-Gurion reminded Bevin that the Balfour Declaration, the League of Nations Mandate and the White Paper, to which Labour had been loudly opposed, antedated World War II. He also insisted that the primary purpose of the Mandate was always the establishment of the Jewish National Home and that meant giving the Jews a chance of becoming a majority and having their own state.

This is really the crux of the problem. Are the Jews to remain a minority in Palestine as they are throughout the world . . . [Jews] will never agree that the return of Jews to their historic homeland should be dependent on anyone else's consent, that Jews in Palestine should remain a minority; and that they should be deprived of statehood.²²

On the same day of his speech in the House, Bevin spoke to the press. To them he emphasized that "the British Government had never undertaken to establish a Jewish state in Palestine . . . the tragedy of the Balfour Declaration was that it was unilateral . . . Arabs . . . were not a people to be ignored".²³ Bevin also displayed some bitterness over the Jewish Agency's pointed refusal to take up the approximately 2,000 immigration certificates remaining under the White Paper. He contrasted that fact with Jewish Agency statements about concern for Jewish survivors.

A more comprehensive response to Bevin's parliamentary remarks and press conference come from Berl Locker. In a four page publication, Locker carefully expanded upon Ben-Gurion's remarks. With respect to Bevin's frame of reference for the A.A.C., he posed the following:

Would it not be simplest (a) to make known to all concerned their right [Jewish displaced persons] to live again in their old countries (b) to open the doors of Palestine (c) to invite other countries to state what numbers and what categories of Jewish immigrants they are prepared to admit, and then let the Jews choose where they prefer to go? This would be the only free choice. Instead you propose a Committee of Inquiry . . . What a waste of time, when time is so vital in the face of these people's plight? . . . What a mockery of freedom of choice, when the people concerned know that the doors of Palestine are virtually closed and other countries have recently shown so little inclination to modify their immigration policy in favour of the Jews.²⁴

Locker was particularly critical of the Foreign Secretary's tendency to pre-judge the issue. To Bevin's remarks about Palestine not being able to provide sufficient opportunity for grappling with the whole problem of displaced Jews, Locker asked:

How do you know that Mr. Bevin? And if you know it, why enquire? Are you not prejudicing the findings of the Committee of Inquiry before it is even appointed?

Notes

1. The expression 'Welfare State' was employed as a collective designation for the desired social outcomes of programs embraced by the Labour Party during and after the war. In December 1942, the Beveridge Report had broken new ground by recommending to the Coalition Government that it adopt policies which would guarantee full employment, a national health scheme and family allowances. Labour heartily endorsed these proposals. The party also supported subsequent legislation which appeared to be in line with their projected 'Welfare State' (e.g. Education and Location of Industry Acts).
2. George Orwell. "The British General Election" Commentary, November 1945, Volume 1, No. 1, p. 66.
3. CAB 129/2. C.P. (47) 32. Report of the Palestine Committee taken up by the Cabinet September 8, 1945. p. 6.
4. Orwell. p. 69.
5. Ibid., p. 70.
6. Gorny, p. 203.
7. CAB 129/2. C.P. (47) 32. Report of the Palestine Committee taken up by the Cabinet September 8, 1945. p. 2.
8. Hurewitz, p. 229.
9. Earl G. Harrison, American representative on the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees was asked by President Truman in late June 1945 to investigate the situation of displaced persons in Europe with particular attention to the emigration desires of Jews who could not be returned to their countries of origin. Truman was looking for accurate information upon which to make decisions in respect of Palestine. His predecessor, Franklin Roosevelt had not bequeathed him a clear policy line and Truman was feeling the pressure of pro and anti Zionist lobbies. Harrison found that the overwhelming majority of the Jewish D.P.'s strongly preferred to emigrate to Palestine, and Harrison supported the Jewish Agency's petition for an immediate 100,000 certificates. Interestingly enough, there were nowhere near 100,000 Jewish D.P.'s in the western zone of occupation at that time.
10. Jewish Labour News. September 27, 1945.
11. Morgan Phillips file. Miscellaneous letters on the subject of Palestine. L.A.
12. "Death Sentence on Jewish Survivors," Zionist Review, October 5, 1945.
13. H. Wilson. The Chariot of Israel. 'Britain, America and the State of Israel' (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson). p. 137.

14. For the National Executive Committee in attendance were Mr. Harold J. Laski (Chairman), Mr. Harold Clay, Mrs. B. Ayrton Gould M.P., Mr. W. Green, Mr. P.T. Heady, Mr. C. Johnson and Mr. Morgan Phillips (Secretary). The Jewish delegation consisted of Mr. Berl Locker, member of the Executive of the Jewish Agency, Mr. M. Shertok, Head of the Agency's Political Department and Mr. Nathan Jackson, Secretary of Poale Zion (Great Britain).
15. Minutes of meeting between National Executive Committee representatives and Jewish delegation on the subject of Palestine. October 5, 1945. GS/1/1/131 L.A.
16. Notes of discussion, initialled by Harold Laski, October 22, 1945.
17. "Foreign Secretary's Statement to the House of Commons, November 13, 1945," Zionist Review, November 16, 1945.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. "London Press Conference of David Ben Gurion," Zionist Review, November 16, 1945.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. "Mr. Bevin explains his policy. Appeal To Newspapermen," Zionist Review, November 16, 1945.
24. B. Locker. "Open Letter to Mr. Bevin." London: Narod Press, December 1945.

Chapter 8Second Political Crisis (1946)

The Anglo-American Committee consisted of six British and six American members; the co-chairmen were Justice John E. Singleton (Great Britain) and Judge Joseph C. Hutcheson (United States).¹ The hearings were begun in Washington, D.C. in January, 1946. The full Committee or subgroups heard witnesses in London, in displaced persons camps in the British American and French occupation zones and in Poland (the Soviets barred the Committee from its occupation zone). After leaving Europe the Committee took testimony in Cairo, Palestine, Damascus, Beirut, Baghdad, Riyadh and Amman. Most Jewish witnesses called for the immediate admittance of 100,000 Jewish refugees and the creation of a Jewish state. Arab witnesses insisted on an end to Jewish immigration and the immediate establishment of an independent Palestine. While the Commission was at work, Palestinian Arabs and Zionist Jews prepared themselves for an armed struggle. The Jewish Agency deliberately increased the flow of illegal immigration in order to show Britain and the world the 'immorality' of a policy which still reflected the 1939 White Paper. The Haganah, temporarily cooperating with the more extreme Irgun Zwei Leumi and Lehi groups, launched a wave of assaults against British installations in Palestine.²

The Jewish Agency selectively dissociated itself from those attacks which it perceived as 'terrorist', but refused to cooperate in suppressing them so long as Britain prevented 'illegal' immigration. The Agency insisted that it had no knowledge of or relationship to any military formation in the Yishuv, but the Mandatory had long been aware of the close ties between the Agency and the Haganah. In the light of that knowledge, High Commissioner Sir Alan Cunningham pressed London at the

beginning of 1946 for permission to occupy Jewish Agency buildings and detain the Agency's leadership. He was not allowed to do so because the British Government feared that such action would alienate moderate Zionists as well as prevent the Anglo-American Commission from carrying out its tasks. This restraint of the military came at some cost to army morale.

On April 29, 1946 the British Cabinet met to study the Anglo-American Commission Report. Its more important recommendations were: the immediate issue of 100,000 immigration certificates, the maintenance of an undivided Palestine, the continuation of the Mandate until a trusteeship under United Nations auspices could be substituted, the cancellation of the 1940 Land Transfer Regulations and the suppression of violence whatever the source. Bevin told the Cabinet the report offered chances for a reasonable settlement, provided that the Americans were kept involved.

The essence of our policy should be to retain the interest and participation of the United States Government in this problem.³

Bevin urged that the two governments make no public statement about the Report beyond indicating that they were in consultation with each other. President Truman, however, did not concur. He chose, instead, to select and publicly praise one item -- the recommendation for 100,000 entry certificates. This, in turn, led Attlee to ask for Cabinet approval to make a statement in Parliament. On May 1, the day the Report was made public, Attlee warned the House:

Its [the Report] execution would entail very heavy immediate and long term commitments. His Majesty's Government wish to be satisfied that they will not be called upon to implement a policy which would involve them single-handed in such commitments, and in the course of joint examination they will wish to ascertain to what extent the Government of the United States would be prepared to share the resulting additional military and financial responsibilities.⁴

Attlee insisted that the recommended immigration of 100,000 could not be carried out unless Arabs and Jews disarmed. Knowing this to be extremely unlikely, Attlee was, in effect, putting the United States and Great Britain back to their respective positions of September 1945. Zionists were encouraged by Truman's remarks; the Arabs were angered. They rejected the A.A.C. Report in its entirety and warned of dire consequences to Anglo-American interests should there be any attempt at implementation.

Six weeks after the A.A.C. Report was issued, Truman appointed a committee of three cabinet secretaries (State, War and Treasury) to help him formulate policy on Palestine. They, in turn, named alternates who were empowered to negotiate with a British group of equivalent size and rank. Thus was born the so-called experts' committee whose task it was to define the nature of the American response to the A.A.C. recommendations. Their frame of reference permitted the negotiation of economic, political and logistical responsibilities with respect to the movement of displaced Jews and related matters.

In the second week of June, Bevin was forced to defend his actions on Palestine at the Labour Party's Annual Conference at Bournemouth. There were no less than five resolutions on Palestine, all of them calling on the Government to abandon the White Paper and live up to the intent of the Party's wartime resolutions. In his reply Bevin explained:

. . . I came to the conclusion that the wiping out of the White Paper would not lead us very far . . . Those 100,000 do not touch the fringe of this problem of the refugees in Europe . . . If we put 100,000 Jews into Palestine tomorrow, I would have to put another division of British troops there. I am not prepared to do it. . . . the financial issue involved in this business is tremendous and the . . . Exchequer cannot take it . . . You cannot deal with the Palestinian Arabs alone. The Arab League has become a fact and you cannot ignore it.⁵

His final remarks left no room for misunderstanding his position on Jewish statehood:

While I agree with a Palestine state of some kind -- and I use the phrase "Palestine state" and not "Jewish state" -- I do not believe in absolutely exclusive racial states.

Zionist umbrage at these remarks was compounded by Bevin's blunt comments about American political intervention.

There has been the agitation in the United States, and particularly in New York, for 100,000 Jews to be put into Palestine. I hope I will not be misunderstood in America if I say this was proposed with the purest of motives. They did not want too many Jews in New York.

These remarks struck an extremely sensitive nerve in American and Jewish psyches. For many Zionists, Bevin became the arch enemy of the Zionist dream and by their understanding a foe of the Jewish people. To some that meant Bevin had become an anti-semite.

In his speech, Bevin had been candid about some of his reasons for opposing a Jewish state. With the exception of a fleeting reference to Egypt as a "great problem bound up with it [Palestine]" Bevin had said nothing about the existence of British strategic or regional interests. That omission when coupled with a growing nationalist clamour for British withdrawal from Egypt and still substantial British military establishment in Palestine led some Yishuv leaders to conclude that Bevin had an unstated reason for opposing a Jewish state. Palestine, in their analysis, was being retained as Britain's primary base for the protection of imperial interests. This was most certainly the view of the service chiefs whose post-war preference for Palestine had predisposed them to a solution which offered maximal security and military advantage. They needed a stable Palestine preferably unified. It made little sense to invest heavily atop a powder-keg.

June witnessed a growing number of terrorist attacks on the British in Palestine and these contributed to a further deterioration in Anglo-Zionist relationships. On June 29th the British Cabinet permitted the British Army in Palestine to mount

Operation Agatha. The military imposed a state of siege, searched major urban and selected rural areas for arms and proscribed persons, occupied important public buildings, seized Jewish Agency files, arrested some 2,700 persons, most of whom had Agency ties, and rigidly censored all communications. The Palestine Government explained these actions as necessary to root out terrorists and restore order. Given the extent of the searches and the pattern of arrests it would appear that the real reason was to cripple the largest Jewish military formation, the Haganah and its striking arm, the Palmach. Before the two week action was over, all but some 700 detainees were freed; those deemed dangerous or in leadership positions were not. Their release came at a time when the United States House of Representatives was debating a vital loan to Britain (July 8th - 13th). Given the outcry in America over Operation Agatha it is not unreasonable to assume that the timing of the partial release was not entirely coincidental. Operation Agatha was a failure; it neither disarmed nor impaired the Palmach. It did succeed, however, in multiplying Britain's difficulties in Palestine. Moderate elements in the Yishuv became more alienated and the Jewish Agency lost much of its ability to hold back the extremists. On July 22 the Irgun blew up the government office wing of the King David Hotel killing some ninety British, Arab and Jewish civil servants. The Jewish Agency unreservedly condemned this act but by then the British authorities were not too inclined to distinguish between Haganah, Irgun and Lehi. The Mandatory authorities mounted a massive search for the perpetrators but were only partially successful. The cumulative effect of these assaults was to undermine British authority and morale in Palestine.

On July 31st the six man experts' committee report was presented to the House of Commons by the Lord President of the Council, Herbert Morrison. The proposals became known as the Morrison-Grady plan. The authors envisioned the mandate

being converted into a trusteeship and called for dividing Palestine into two provinces, one Arab and one Jewish, and two British controlled districts, a Jerusalem enclave and the Negev. The central government would retain control over defence and foreign relations as well as temporary authority over other areas including policing, justice, civil aviation, railways and broadcasting. Each province would be autonomous in all intra-communal matters. For the first five years the presidents of each provincial legislature would be appointed by the High Commissioner who would also have veto power over provincial legislation. If the scheme were to be implemented as a whole, then 100,000 Jewish refugees would be admitted in the first year. All subsequent immigration into the provinces would be subject to final control by the High Commissioner. The United States which had already indicated its willingness to transport 100,000 refugees and sustain them for the first two months was to be approached for grants and loans. Morrison asserted that:

The Jews . . . will be free to exercise a large measure of control over immigration into their own Province, and to forward there the development of the Jewish National Home . . . Land Transfer Regulations . . . repealed. The . . . great majority of Arabs will be freed once and for all from any fear of Jewish domination . . . citizens of Arab Province will at once achieve a large measure of autonomy . . . powerful safeguards . . . provided to protect the rights of the Arab minority in the Jewish Province.⁶

He added that His Majesty's Government had no final constitutional arrangement in mind; the scheme could lead to either federation or partition. He concluded by reemphasizing the necessity for American involvement.

The full implementation of the experts' plan as a whole depends on United States cooperation. I hope that that will be forthcoming. If not, we shall have to reconsider the position, particularly as regards the economic and financial implications, and this is bound to affect the tempo and extent of immigration and development.

The White House response came on the same day and said that Truman wanted more time for discussion with his three representatives on the experts' committee. This was widely interpreted as a sign that Truman did not intend to endorse the scheme. Two days later, Churchill spoke out in the House about the Labour Government's handling of the Mandate to date.

Had I the opportunity of guiding the course of events after the war a year ago, I should have faithfully pursued the Zionist cause as I have defined it; and I have not abandoned it today . . . I am against preventing Jews from doing anything which other people are allowed to do.⁷

Referring to press accounts which interpreted Truman's response to the Morrison-Grady plan as a form of shelving, Churchill remarked: "If this Anglo-American cooperation fails . . . the record of the Administration . . . will stand forth as a monument of incapacity." He offered the Government an alternative:

I think the Government should say that if the United States will not come and share the burden of the Zionist cause, as defined or agreed, we should now give notice that we will return our Mandate to UNO and that we will evacuate Palestine within a specified period. At the same time we should inform Egypt that we stand by our treaty rights and will, by all means, maintain our position in the Canal Zone.

The reference to Egypt was aimed at those who fearing the loss of Egypt had come to view Palestine as the next best site from which to protect British interests. As a follow-up to the Morrison-Grady plan, the British had hoped to co-sponsor with the United States an all party conference to examine the autonomy proposals, but American disinterest and Zionist opposition obviated that course of action.

In mid-August the Foreign Ministers of the seven Arab League States agreed to attend British initiated talks in London only if they were free to propose the establishment of an independent Palestine. They also insisted that the Americans and

Jews be excluded. The Arab Higher Committee (Palestine) endorsed the League's request and added its own condition that the Mufti of Jerusalem be allowed to attend.⁸ The British replied that counterproposals to the autonomy scheme would be permitted, but that the Mufti would not be allowed to attend. The High Commissioner was designated to select the Arab Palestine delegation in order to include some representation not dominated by the Mufti.

On August 15th, the Colonial Secretary, George Hall, invited the Jewish Agency to parallel talks in London. The Agency's response was conditional; the talks would have to be based on partition proposals already communicated and informally discussed with American and British authorities.⁹ The Agency also insisted on the freedom to name its own delegation which would perforce have to include detainees, proscribed persons and non-Zionists. Britain demurred.

The London Conference opened on September 10th, 1946; only the British and the Arab League states attended. Without American, Arab Palestinian and Jewish participation there was little prospect of success. The Arabs argued against the provincial autonomy plan; they saw it as a way station to partition. They proposed, instead, that the Mandate be transformed into an independent Palestine no later than December 31, 1948.

On September 12, the British suspended the talks on the grounds that more time was needed to study the Arab proposals. In actual fact, Bevin had begun to entertain the hope that the Americans and the Jewish Agency might be induced to join the parleys. This hope rested on two foundations: the belief that once the American biennial elections were over in early November, the American government would become more resistant to Zionist pressures and signs that the Jewish Agency was softening in its decision not to attend the talks. That hope proved illusory. The American biennial election worked to the advantage of the Zionist cause.¹⁰ President

Truman, anxious to bolster his Party's position, issued a statement on Palestine in which he recounted his Administration's efforts at securing the admission of 100,000 displaced persons into Palestine. He also affirmed the Jewish Agency's proposed partition scheme as likely to win widespread approval in America, and he urged that Britain permit substantial numbers of Jewish refugees into Palestine immediately. Bevin was most upset; the Foreign Office, warned in advance about Truman's announcement, was unable to prevent its being made. Later, Bevin would claim that Truman's intervention ruined the possibilities of a settlement emanating from an enlarged London Conference. On October 5, Churchill addressing the Conservative Party's Annual Conference at Blackpool, savaged the Labour Government for its failure to fulfill lavish pro-Zionist pre-election pledges.

These promises were no sooner made than they were discarded, and now all through this year the Government stand vacillating without any plan or policy, holding on to the Mandate in which they have no vital interest, gaining the distrust and the hostility both of the Arab and the Jew and exposing us to worldwide reprobation for their manifest incapacity.¹¹

In October Colonial Secretary Hall was succeeded by his deputy, Creech-Jones who was most anxious to defuse the existing tension between the Jewish Agency and the British Government so that the Zionists would find it possible to attend the second stage of the London Conference. On October 29, the Zionist Inner General Council called on the Yishuv to outlaw terrorists and "deny them all encouragement, support and assistance."¹² The mandatory took this as evidence of Jewish Agency good faith and a week later released the remaining detainees.

The second stage of the London Conference was put off until early 1947 so that Jewish Agency participation could be debated at the 22nd World Zionist Congress (December 9 - 14) in Basle, Switzerland. The Congress was itself divided into three factions: one wanted a bi-nationalist Palestine and grouped itself around Hashomer Haza'ir, a Marxist-Zionist party; a second demanded a Jewish state on both sides of

the Jordan; a third subdivided into moderates and activists was committed to partition. The difference within the latter group lay with the matter of tactics. The moderates, led by Weizmann, Shertok and Rabbi Stephen Wise of the United States¹³ were prepared to attend the London Conference on the basis of a partition formula suggested by the Jewish Agency back in August.¹⁴ The activists led by Ben-Gurion and Dr. Abba Hillel Silver wanted the same formula, but insisted that the proposal had to come from the British. The activists won and the Congress chose not to permit Agency participation. They did, however, leave the door open should there occur any favorable change of situation. The delegates reaffirmed the three demands of the Biltmore Program and then proceeded to elect their executive. Weizmann, the apostle of Anglo-Zionist cooperation, was not re-elected, but out of deference to his prestige and service, the post of president was left vacant. The activists won the day; Ben-Gurion remained Jewish Agency Chairman in Palestine, while Dr. Abba Hillel Silver continued to head the American section.

With the London talks scheduled to reconvene on January 21, the cabinet met on January 15 to consider a Bevin memorandum on the policy line to be followed. The memo centered on three proposals: the provincial autonomy plan as drafted by the Anglo-American experts' committee in July 1946 and emphatically rejected by both Arabs and Jews, an Arab scheme for an independent unitary state already known to be unacceptable to the Jews and a Zionist plan for partition extremely unpalatable to the Arabs. The memo turned to partition first and dismissed it as non-viable because it would . . . "be unacceptable to the United Nations, and . . . we could not give effect to this policy without previously obtaining the consent of the United Nations."¹⁵ Bevin reasoned:

If we allowed the Jews to insist on partition and the creation of a Jewish state (which was not promised in the Balfour Declaration) then we would face defeat in the United Nations. Even if we follow the plan of merging the Arab and the

British proposals, I think the issue will have to go before the United Nations. But in that event I am satisfied that we should get sufficient support.

Bevin then went on to state:

Personally, I would have no very violent objection to partition if I thought it would prove to be a solution. But I cannot conceive of the British Government, even aided by the United States, being able to carry partition with the requisite majority.

Bevin urged his colleagues to approve a line of action which would combine the Anglo-American and Arab proposals and point the way to an independent, unitary state. As such a state would undoubtedly enjoy a permanent Arab majority, Bevin insisted that the Arabs must be persuaded to show some willingness to concede a measure of future Jewish immigration.

We must of course make it clear that we cannot accept the Arab proposals on immigration, though steps must be taken to prevent a real flooding of the country by Jewish immigrants.

Bevin argued that the outstanding merit of his proposal lay in the fact that it was the only one likely to lead to a negotiated settlement acceptable to at least one of the directly interested parties. He then went on to emphasize that:

These arguments for the proposal become even more cogent if it is agreed that one of our principal motives in retaining responsibility for Palestine is to secure our political and strategic position in the Middle East, which depends to a great extent on the maintenance of Arab goodwill.

Bevin warned his colleagues that a failed conference accompanied by a Palestine policy perceived as inimical to Arab interests would produce anti-British manifestations, the likely alienation of friendly regimes and the possible toppling of more moderate leaders (e.g. Iraq). He insisted that:

. . . nny policy which aroused Arab hostility would be challenged in the United Nations by the whole of the Arab bloc . . . in this event the Soviet group would align itself with the Arabs. We should then have helped to bring about a diplomatic combination which it should be one of the first aims of our policy to prevent, and which if it lasted would weaken our position not only in the Middle East but also at . . . the United Nations.

He was convinced that only a policy of early concession of independence to a unitary Palestinian state constituted on democratic principles would stand a chance of approval at the United Nations.

It is worthy of note that attached to the Bevin memorandum and dated January 8, 1947, were a pair of annexes by the High Commissioner, Sir Alan Cunningham, who argued forcefully against any inclination to embrace provincial autonomy as either an end in itself or as a means to partition. Cunningham did not mince words. He took the position that no scheme for provincial autonomy in Palestine had a chance because:

the forces of nationalism are accompanied by the psychology of the Jew, which it is important to recognize as something quite abnormal and unresponsive to rational treatment, and because Arab politics have their raison d'etre not in the field of government or administration but in the field of religion and nationalism only.¹⁶

Cunningham came right to the point. "Both sides want independence and will not be happy till they get it. It is a legitimate aspiration that can in fact only be achieved by Partition." Anything less was 'an essentially unattractive objective'. In Annex II, Cunningham argued against any thought of using provincial autonomy as a transition to partition. He held that such a course would fly in the face of the most important requirements of a Palestine solution, namely, urgency and finality. Cunningham foresaw the transitional years as strife ridden, expensive and unproductive. If it was to be partition then 'twere well if 'twere done quickly.'

The cabinet also invited the views of the military on the military implications of future policy. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff indicated that single party opposition to a particular policy could be handled by the forces already in Palestine. Should both Arabs and Jews actively resist it would require military reinforcements at the expense of occupation forces in Germany. On the matter of the strategic importance of Palestine, the Chief of the Air Staff held that:

It was essential to our defence that we should be able to fight from the Middle East in war . . . we must maintain our foothold there in peace . . . In future we should not be able to use India as a base for . . . deployment . . . it was the more essential . . . we should retain other bases in the middle East . . . for this purpose.

Palestine was of special importance in this general scheme of defence . . . if it was necessary we should hold Palestine as a screen for the defence of Egypt . . . as a base for the mobile reserve of troops which must be kept ready . . .¹⁷

He indicated that so long as the necessary military facilities were obtainable throughout Palestine, it was immaterial whether Palestine was partitioned or not. However, he indicated that if it became necessary to antagonize one of the two warring communities, from the purely military angle, it was preferable to find a solution

which did not involve the continuing hostility of the Arabs; for in that event . . . difficulties would not be confined to Palestine but would extend throughout the whole of the Middle East.

In the minutes of the Cabinet for January 15, 1947, the Foreign Secretary reviewed the various stages of the Palestine problem since the end of the war. He indicated that had the wartime Coalition Government which favoured partition imposed it just before the war ended, it might have taken hold. But that opportunity had been lost. He expressed the belief that a revised post-war Jewish immigration rate (e.g. 4,000/month) would have contained most of the Jewish clamor about rescue of Jewish D.P.'s. He blamed Truman's request for 100,000 immigration certificates for deflecting and making more difficult the search for a solution. He also faulted the Labour Party for endorsing the Zionist demand for the creation of an independent Jewish state. He was sure that "the situation would be eased if other countries could be persuaded to admit a number of Jewish immigrants from Europe."¹⁸ The Colonial Secretary reiterated his preference for some form of partition. In the ensuing debate Creech Jones' views were echoed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Hugh Dalton,

who held that, "on the merits, the best solution was partition. Events had shown that Jews and Arabs could not, and would not work together in Palestine."¹⁹ A number of other ministers also expressed a leaning towards partition. During the discussions the Minister of Defense echoed the line of the Chiefs of Staff:

. . . from the point of view of our strategic interest it would be more disadvantageous to us to incur the continuing hostility of the Arab state. For in that event, the Soviet Government would undoubtedly support them, with the intention of undermining the position of the British Commonwealth and the United States in the Persian Gulf area.²⁰

The Minister of Health challenged this view. He argued that

. . . a friendly Jewish State in Palestine would give us a safer military base than any we should find in any Arab state.²¹

The meeting ended without taking any decisions. On January 16, Creech Jones weighed in with a memorandum which took issue with Bevin's recommendations.

As the Minister responsible for the administration of Palestine, I must submit that, after much inquiry and discussion, I cannot see any hope of a settlement on these lines.²²

The Colonial Secretary agreed with the High Commissioner that Provincial Autonomy was beyond practicality. He dismissed the Arab plan as a near repetition of the 1939 White Paper with even greater restrictions on Jewish rights. He argued that such a scheme

would spell the cessation of immigration, the arrest of Jewish development in Palestine, and the permanent subjugation of the National Home . . . to a backward Arab electorate, largely illiterate and avowedly inimical to its further progress.

He went on to point out that the three cardinal conditions of the Arab plan, namely, Arab majority control of the Government and Jewish immigration wedded to an early withdrawal of mandatory supervision would initially produce a Jewish rebellion and ultimately a civil war with possibly serious ramifications for long settled Jewish communities in other parts of the region. He foresaw widespread disorder and

bloodshed, a deeply alienated American public and Congress; he held that such consequences would be impossible to defend in Parliament or in the country.

It would mean a gross betrayal of the Jews if, after undertaking responsibility for the original establishment and subsequent safeguarding of the Jewish National Home, we were to hand them over to the mercy of the Arabs as subjects of a state, of which, in all probability, the Mufti would be the Head, with no power of interference from outside. The policy would be in diametrical conflict with the undertakings given by the Labour Party, prior to its assumption of power, regarding the development of the National Home.

Creech Jones plumped for partition as the only reasonable solution. He called for the government to prepare a scheme based on a modification of the partition plan prepared for the Cabinet Committee of 1944.

. . . I can see in partition a hope of the solution . . . most in harmony with public opinion . . . the Press in this country . . . most likely to win United States support and the endorsement of the Labour Party.

He ended by emphasizing the necessity for referring any new policy to the United Nations.

It seems to me . . . that the problem before us is not what policy we shall immediately implement, but what policy we shall recommend to the United Nations for implementation.

And should the United Nations vote down a proposed partition at least "the responsibility for rejecting it and for finding an alternative solution would rest fairly and squarely with the United Nations." He saw the situation as intolerable and no longer capable of being maintained. Creech Jones ended his memo on a sombre note.

. . . if the United Nations fail to find an answer which we deem acceptable it will be necessary to consider whether we should not announce our intention to withdraw from a situation which will have become impossible.

Notes

1. The American members were James G. MacDonald (former High Commissioner for refugees for the League of Nations), Bartly C. Crum (a San Francisco lawyer), Frank W. Buxton (editor of the Boston Herald), Dr. Frank Aydelotte (director of the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton), and William Phillips (a career diplomat). The British members were Richard Crossman (Labour M.P.), Maj. Reginald E. Manningham-Buller (Conservative M.P.), Lord Robert Morrison, Wilfrid Crick (economic advisor to the British Midland Bank) and Sir Frederick Leggett (a personal friend to Bevin and Britain's representative to the International Labour Office).
2. Lehi was the Hebrew acronym for a breakaway faction of the Irgun. Led by Abraham Stern his followers refused to accede to Jabotinsky's call for a cessation of the attacks on the British Mandatory during the war. Stern was killed in February 1942, but his followers carried on. Their most notorious act was the assassination of Lord Moyne in 1944. That act of terror cost the Zionists some significant sympathy and more important, political support. Winston Churchill lost interest in pushing for a pro-Zionist partition just as the wartime cabinet Palestine Committee had come to embrace it.
3. Wilson. p. 146.
4. Ibid. P. 149.
5. Verbatim report of Mr. Ernest Bevin's remarks on Palestine made at the Labour Party Conference, June 12, 1946. L.A.
6. Wilson. p. 171.
7. Hansard Vol. 426 cols 1246 - 58.
8. In late 1937, the Mufti, about to be arrested by the British authorities in Palestine fled the Lebanon. At the outbreak of the war he fled to Iraq where in 1941 he conspired with Rashid Ali in a pro-Axis coup against the British. When the coup failed he went on to Germany via Iran. In Germany he collaborated in the Axis war effort. At war's end he was detained in France. The British made feint efforts at extradition while the French kept him under a very loose surveillance. In May 1946 he fled France and surfaced in Egypt, where he was granted asylum. Denied entry into Palestine by British order he continued to influence the Palestine Higher Executive from his headquarters in Cairo.
9. The Jewish Agency proposals for a 'viable' Jewish State in an adequate area of Palestine included the Galilee, the coastal plain, as recommended by the 1937 Peel Commission and the Negev. The remainder of the country, including the central highlands, Jaffa and a connecting corridor between the two, would go to the Arabs. These proposals were adopted in a secret pro-partition vote.
10. America's Jewish population was highly urbanized and concentrated in a half dozen states which were pivotal at election time. American Jews also tended

to be more active politically than other ethnic minorities. By war's end the Congress had become highly sensitized and very well disposed towards the Zionist cause, and no unelected President, aspiring to be elected, could afford to ignore such political realities.

11. Hurewitz p. 266.
12. Ibid. p. 267.
13. Stephen S. Wise (1874 - 1949) was a rabbi, Jewish communal leader, committed Zionist, and an active supporter of presidents Wilson and Roosevelt with whom he interceded on matters of Jewish concern. In 1916, Wise helped found the American Jewish Congress (1922) which he served as vice-president (1922 - 25) and president (1925 - 29, 1936 - 49). He was elected in 1919 as one of the Jewish representative to the Paris Peace Conference. In 1936 he helped found the World Jewish Congress, of which he remained president until his death. Wise was also active in the Zionist Organization of America during its very early years.
14. See Note 9.
15. CAB 129/16. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, "Palestine". January 15, 1947.
16. CAB 129/16, p. 1. Annex I. Note By the High Commissioner For Palestine. Weakness of The Provincial Autonomy Plan. Annex II. Note By The High Commissioner For Palestine. Objections To The Proposal To Use The Provincial Autonomy Scheme as Transitional to Partition Over a Period of Five Years. CAB 129/16.
17. CAB 128/11 C.M. (47) 6th Conclusions, Minute 3. January 15, 1947, p. 2.
18. CAB 128/11 C.M. (47) 6th Conclusions, Minute 4. January 15, 1947, p. 3.
19. Ibid., p. 6.
20. Ibid., p. 7.
21. Ibid.
22. CAB 129/11 C.P. (47) 32. January 16, 1947, p. 1.

Chapter 9Failure and Leavetaking (1947)

The interval between the first and second stages of the London Conference served to further polarize Arabs and Zionists. The Conference's second stage began on January 17, 1947 under even less promising circumstances than the first. The Palestine Arab Higher Executive was formally represented and added a more intransigent element to the Arab side. Because the Jewish Agency did not attend, the Americans chose not to participate, even as observers. Foreign Secretary Bevin submitted a final proposal, formally to the Arabs and informally to the Jews. It called for a five year trusteeship to be succeeded by a binational unitary state. During the five years the High Commissioner would exercise supreme legislative and executive authority. In the interim Arabs and Jews would be accorded wide powers of cantonal authority based on the population distribution. As soon as the trusteeship agreements were concluded, the Jewish Agency would be dissolved and both communities would be given a voice on an advisory council. The 100,000 Jews would be admitted over two years rather than one. In the last three years the Arabs would have a voice in immigration policy, but the ultimate decision would rest with the United Nations Trusteeship Council. At the end of four years elections would be held for a constituent council. Both sides rejected the offer.

On February 14, the Cabinet met to consider a memorandum by the Foreign and Colonial Secretaries on the status of the London talks.

The Jews had rejected them [the final proposals] as likely to lead to an independent unitary state in which the Jews would be a permanent minority. The Arabs had rejected them as leading inevitably to Partition and also because they provided for further Jewish immigration.¹

The memorandum went on to recommend that His Majesty's Government give immediate notice of intention to refer the problem of Palestine to the United Nations along with a historical account of Britain's handling of the trust and an explanation of the various proposed solutions. The Secretaries also advised that H.M.G. "without . . . making any recommendations, should invite the Assembly to find a solution of the problem." In analyzing his reasons for backing this recommendation Bevin shared his impression that neither Jews nor Arabs were anxious to have the problem discussed in the United Nations.

. . . if we now announced our firm intention to take the matter to the United Nations Assembly, this might bring them to a more reasonable frame of mind.

He indicated that notice to submit the question to the United Nations, scheduled to meet in September, could be withdrawn if a solution acceptable to both parties could be found before the Assembly convened. The Lord Chancellor, Lord Jowitt, indicated that Messrs. Ben-Gurion and Marks of the Jewish Agency had told him in private interviews that they preferred that a final solution not to be forced through a U.N. referral. They were prepared to wait for a future date if H.M.G. would grant two concessions: 100,000 Jewish immigration admissions over two years and subsequent inflow regulated solely by economic absorption capacity. The other was the right of Jews to settle and buy land in any part of Palestine. Bevin saw this as a device whereby

His Majesty's Government should continue to administer the Mandate in such a way as to enable the Jews to attain, by immigration, a numerical majority in Palestine

and he predicted widespread Arab hostility to such a course of action. A number of ministers reiterated the same position they had held at the meeting of January 15. Speaking for the Chiefs of Staff, the Chief of the Air Staff shared his colleagues' concern that "if the future of Palestine were left to the decision of the United

Nations, then we could not be sure that we should be able to secure there the military facilities which we required." Dalton still held to partition as the best means for securing peace in Palestine while safeguarding H.M.G.'s strategic interests. In subsequent discussion the Cabinet adopted the view that it was the appropriate moment to submit the whole problem to the United Nations but in such a way that prevented any immediate surrender of the Mandate or any assumption of responsibilities emanating from that referral.

If the settlement suggested by the United Nations were not acceptable . . . we should be at liberty then to surrender the Mandate and leave the United Nations to make other arrangements for the future administration of Palestine.

The Cabinet then went on to discuss two related matters: maintenance of the British position in Palestine until the United Nations could tender its 'advice' and how that advice could be garnered in the shortest time. On February 14 came the official announcement that Britain would refer the Palestine problem to the United Nations. On February 18, Bevin told the House of Commons:

. . . we shall . . . ask the United Nations to consider our report and to recommend a settlement of the problem. We do not intend ourselves to recommend any particular solution.²

On February 25, in the opening segment of a debate on Palestine, Bevin vigorously reiterated his preference for an arbitrated solution and an independent unitary state. In the course of his remarks he did not fail to castigate the American president for previous untimely and damaging interventions. During the same debate Creech Jones in a less assertive speech indicated that by going to the United Nations H.M.G. was only asking for advice on how the Mandate could be administered, and "if the Mandate cannot be administered in its present form we are asking how it can be amended."³

The failure of the talks in London and the decision to put Palestine on the U.N. autumn agenda marked a watershed which was not fully appreciated at the time.

Zionists, in particular, had, with a few notable exceptions, great difficulty in interpreting the British move as much more than a lever to force them into making concessions. Weizmann wrote:

It was not in Mr. Bevin's plans that the U.N. should express itself in favour of the creation of a Jewish State . . . ⁴

At the same time he was able to recognize that

. . . If Britain should give up India, it will not hesitate to leave Palestine if things are made too difficult for her.⁵

According to Professor Michael Cohen, Ben-Gurion was one of the few Zionists who read events correctly by concluding that Britain would no longer undertake any kind of pro-Zionist move in the face of Arab resistance.

Over the following seven months the British position in Palestine worsened. Despite a large and increasingly expensive military and police establishment, the existence of 'Teggart' fortresses and urban 'Bevingrads',⁶ and a draconian set of Emergency Regulations, public security and government authority continued to deteriorate. The British had their hands full trying to interdict 'illegal' immigration while protecting the Mandatory's installations and personnel from attack. In mid March in response to particularly devastating terrorist assaults by the Irgun, the High Commissioner imposed statutory martial law in parts of Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv, accompanied by summary military courts. These actions stretched the military's resources to their utmost, further alienated moderate elements in the Yishuv and still failed to stop terrorism. In mid March martial law was lifted, but remained an ever present possibility.

On April 28, the U.N. Assembly convened in special session, created an ad hoc Special Committee on Palestine (U.N.S.C.O.P.), gave it a broad frame of reference and charged it with reporting back by September 1.

In May, the Jewish Agency leadership became so alarmed at the scope and scale of Jewish terror, primarily Irgun inspired, that it permitted Haganah to take defensive actions against the Irgun. This involved defusing Irgun operations and incapacitating its activists.⁷

In June and July, U.N.S.C.O.P. visited Palestine and there received a vivid impression of how difficult and dangerous the situation had become. On July 18, the episode of the Exodus began and for nearly two months the anguish of its wretched cargo was played out before the world's news media. This long drawn out affair intersected with the Irgun's hanging of two British army sergeants. The latter proved too much for some British army and police units. Their subsequent rampage, with attendant damage to property and loss of life was symptomatic of how much the situation had deteriorated.

The House of Commons, summoned to debate Palestine on August 12, produced a very broad consensus that it was time for Britain to abandon the Mandate. In this they reflected an outraged public opinion which had clearly had its fill of Palestine. The man-in-the street could see no good reason why hard pressed Britain should expend its treasure (to the tune of \$200,000,000 a year) or endanger its soldiers for ungrateful peoples in a land not perceived as vital to Britain. Creech Jones reflected this sentiment:

Among the British public there is fierce questioning as to the burden and cost to Britain, and the tragedy involved by Britain continuing to shoulder this international liability.⁸

A week before Churchill had reminded a huge audience at Blenheim Palace that it made no sense to cling to tiny little Palestine "while we had blithely cast away mighty India and Burma."⁹

By August, London was pressuring Cunningham to impose martial law and in something of a reversal from the previous March, both Cunningham and the army

were not keen to repeat a course of action which offered little promise of success.

On August 31, 1947, U.N.S.C.O.P. completed its report and proposed that the British Mandate in Palestine be terminated. Eight states signed the majority report calling for independent Arab and Jewish states and an international zone of Jerusalem. Independence was to come to the two states after a two year transitional period beginning September 1, 1947. Britain would continue its administration under U.N. auspices and up to 150,000 immigrants would be permitted entry into the Jewish portion. Prior to independence the two states would have to negotiate a U.N. approved economic union and provide legal guarantees for minorities. Jerusalem would remain a U.N. trusteeship. The three state minority plan called for an independent federal state after a three year transition under a U.N. designed interim administration.

By September, the confluence of pressures for a British withdrawal from Palestine were proving to be less and less resistable. The reality of being trapped in a burdensome and thankless task with little prospect for advantage led the British Government on September 20 to choose to evacuate Palestine within six to nine months. Bevin supported the decision to withdraw because British lives and resources would not have to be expended in suppressing one community to the advantage of the other. Attlee, who had given Bevin considerable reign in the matter of Palestine, concurred. He saw a close parallel to that of India where H.M.G. had established a precedent for withdrawing and leaving the contending parties to sort it out between themselves.

Notes

1. CAB 128/9 C.M. 22(47). February 14, 1947.
2. Hansard vol. 433 cols. 990 - 994.
3. Ibid., cols. 2006 - 2007.
4. C. Weizmann. Trial and Error. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949, p. 452.
5. Michael J. Cohen. Palestine And The Great Powers 1945 - 1948. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1982, p. 228.
6. Bevingrad was the contemptuous reference to armed compounds surrounded by massive quantities of concertina wire; these were a feature of British installations particularly in built up areas such as the Government office complex in Jerusalem.
7. The Haganah efforts to interdict the Irgun were known by the designation "Saison" (hunting season). The Palmach refused to participate in these efforts.
8. Michael J. Cohen. Palestine and the Great Powers. p. 246.
9. Ibid.

Conclusion

In mid January 1950 a formal delegation of the British Labour Party returned from an exhausting two-week tour of Israel. The delegation comprised Mr. H.G. Baty and Mr. G.B. Thorneycroft of the T.U.C.; Mr. J.H. Codd and Mr. W. Coldrick, M.P. of the Cooperative Movement; Miss A. Bacon, M.P. and Mr. S. Watson of the Labour Party. They recommended to the Labour Government that it give full recognition to Israel while considering ways and means of improving and consolidating the good relationships which existed in the past.

That such recommendations needed to be made may be taken as one indicator of how much the ties between the British Labour Government and the Yishuv had been damaged.

The injury felt within the Zionist community and the British Labour Party was quite marked. Among Zionists the dominant feeling was one of betrayal by a party which had 'promised' them so much. To their misfortune, Zionists had misinterpreted the loyalties of the British Labour Party and had come to hold some unreal expectations. They also erred in confusing public declamations and party resolutions for statements of policy. They mistook approval from the party's intellectual wing with support by the more parochial trade unionists who comprised the bulk of the party's membership. And finally they erred in thinking that personal, ideological and institutional support for Zionism could never ever be reversed.

On the British side the dominant note was a mixture of bewilderment and anger with the Yishuv for its willingness to abide barbaric assaults on the very nation which had made the National Home possible. Zionists (and Jews) were frequently perceived

as having lost all sense of proportion with respect to Britain's position in Palestine; Zionist self-absorption and demands were seen as part of an enormous ingratitude.

Part of the alienation afflicting the two communities can best be explained by reference to their respective psychological states. For most Zionists and many Jews, Jewish statehood became the bottom line of a massive moral promissory note which had come due after World War II. The British Labour Party and more particularly the Labour Government were seen as the only people in a position to honour that debt. But the British did not, in the main, acknowledge such a claim and were not psychologically or materially prepared to make good on the account. One of the best examples of this psychological factor was exemplified by a Bevin remark to the effect that Zionists were intent on getting to the head of the queue for a solution to their problems. And in a way that Bevin did not grasp, he was right; that was precisely what Zionists intended. Jews had been at the head of the queue for some nineteen hundred years and that experience, coupled with the horrors of World War II, entitled them to be first in line.

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