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The Zionist Movement

The Zionist Movement, the unique instance in world history of a people without a land organizing itself for the rebuilding of its country which had been destroyed, is a comparatively recent growth. It dates its origin from the first Zionist Congress held on the initiative of Dr. Theodor Herzl in Basle, Switzerland, in August 1897. Its formal establishment, however was preceded by an unbroken tradition of Zionist sentiment which was always a conscious and living factor among the Jewish communities scattered throughout the world*.

The Constitution of the Organization has changed very little since 1897. The Organization comprises individual Jews all over the world above the age of 18 who become members by the payment of a membership fee known as the Shekel. They vote for delegates to the supreme body which is the Congress. Until 1901 the Congress used to meet each year and since then, except during the First and Second World Wars, it has met once every two years. The Congress elects a General Council or Actions Committee to run the Organization during the interval between Congresses, and a small Executive which is in charge of administration and of the implementation of Congress resolutions. At the first Congress, Herzl displayed considerable tact and ability in welding together diverse elements into a single organization. Jews had been attracted to the idea of Zionism along widely divergent paths. Religious and irreligious, capitalists and socialists, in fact a cross-section of the Jewish people as it was and is, met together to consider a program of joint action in the interest of the people as a whole it was Herzl's purpose to fix attention on combined action and to divert discussion from issues which could have raised ideological conflict and division. He set a tradition which has been maintained for over half a century and which, with one or two exceptions, has kept the movement whole despite internal conflicts.

The Zionist program as formulated at Basle gave expression to Herzl's view that the Jewish problem was an international concern. The movement aimed at a publicly recognized and internationally guaranteed national home for the Jews in Palestine.

In 1904 Herzl died and the movement was deprived of its central figure, but he had built so well that the Zionist Organization was able to maintain itself in existence as a living force in Jewry at a difficult period when it could offer its followers no sensational political or practical achievements.

After Herzl's death the so-called "practical school" of Zionism came to the fore, led by men like the late Menahem Ussishkin. They claimed that the continuation of the practical work of settlement in Palestine could not wait for the granting of political concessions. They urged that the work started by the Hovevei Zion should be continued and expanded and that this should become the central task of the movement. Herzl had felt that the policy of infiltration into Palestine was fraught with dangers. It would be a long and slow process and might defeat its own ends by raising

* No attempt is made here to give an outline of the history of Zionism.

opposition on the part of the Turkish authorities. He insisted that the practical work should remain in the background and that the main thing was to secure a political charter opening up the possibility of large-scale planned development. On one major point Herzl was entirely in line with the practical Zionists. In 1901 he gave his full support to the establishment of the Jewish National Fund as a central agency of the Jewish people for the purchase and settlement of land in Palestine to be owned by the people. It was symptomatic of his approach, however, that the original resolution provided that the fund should not inaugurate its activities until it had accumulated a sum of at least £250,000. Above everything Herzl was suspicious of work that was of purely demonstrative value.

In between Herzl and his practical Zionist opponents stood a middle group of the young Zionist led by Chaim Weizmann. They had formed a group which called itself the Democratic Fraction and under Weizmann's guidance they developed what came to be termed "Synthetic Zionism". By this they meant that while Herzl had been correct in his view that without international recognition and political concessions large-scale colonization would not be possible, the continuation of practical work on however small a scale was of great importance in that it provided a practical foothold for the struggle for political recognition. Gradually these views secured control of the movement. In 1907 the late Dr. Ruppin was sent to Palestine by the Zionist Organization to investigate conditions and, following on his report, Ruppin was sent back in 1908 to establish the Palestine Office of the Zionist Organization in Jaffa. From that year forward the Zionist Movement played an increasingly important role in the economic life of the country.

From Herzl's death until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, there were no important developments on the political scene as far as Palestine was concerned. But it was a valuable period of preparation.

The outbreak of the First World War was a great blow to the unity of action and organization of the Zionist movement. The bulk of the leadership was Central European and the head offices of the Organization were located in Germany. It was immediately decided that the Organization as such should remain neutral in the world conflict. A bureau was established on neutral territory, at Copenhagen, to serve as a channel of communications between the various parts of the movement. Mr. Nahum Sokolow and Dr. Yehiel Tchlenow of the World Executive were sent to London to be available in the event of serious political developments. In England the movement had the inestimable benefit of the presence of Dr. Haim Weizmann who had been resident in Manchester since 1906 and who had become the President of the English Zionist Federation. In the U.S.A. a Zionist Emergency Committee was formed, headed by Justice Louis D. Brandeis, while Dr. Shmaryahu Levin, another member of the World Executive, who was in America at the outbreak of the war, was asked to stay on the help in the work.

With the entry of Turkey into the war against the Allied Powers at the end of 1914 the political future of Palestine became a question of practical politics. It was now certain that if the Allies won the war the Ottoman Empire would be carved up. What Herzl had searched for in vain was now in existence – a practical basis for realistic political negotiations concerning Palestine.

Dr. Weizmann took the lead in preparing the ground in England. A small political committee was formed and a vigorous program of propaganda by book, pamphlet, press and public speaking was initiated accompanied all the time by serious political contacts. By October 1915 the

ground was already prepared for the formulation of the first official memorandum on the part of the Zionist Organization to the British Government. The memorandum set out a program for the creation of a Jewish State in Palestine after the war and suggested that the country should be placed under some form of trusteeship with the grant of a colonization charter to the Zionist Organization enabling it to bring Jews into the country freely, develop agriculture and industry and pave the way for the assumption of governmental authority by the Jewish community there, once it had attained full growth and stature. After a few months, unofficial talks began between the Zionist leaders and Sir Mark Sykes, of the British Foreign Office, on the nature of the help which the British would be prepared to give Zionism in case of an Allied victory.

On November 2, 1917 the British Foreign Secretary Mr. A.J. Balfour issued, in the form of a letter to Lord Rothschild, a declaration of the British Government's sympathy with the aspirations of Zionism and an undertaking to use its best endeavors to facilitate the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine.

A considerable literature has been written on the exact meaning and importance of the Balfour Declaration. The historical sources show beyond doubt that the Declaration was not in the nature of a unilateral promise; it was part of a mutual contract between the British Government and the Zionist Organization. In return for it the Zionist Organization pledged itself to use all the influence at its command, which was by no means inconsiderable, among the Jewish communities in Russia and America in the Allied interest. That part of the bargain was honored. The British War Office communications system was placed at the disposal of the Zionist Organization to communicate the text of the Declaration to all parts of the world and it was received by Jewry everywhere with great enthusiasm.

The Declaration was certainly not the charter which had been asked for in the October 1915 memorandum. It was drawn in vague terms but it did open up a political opportunity such as had never before existed. Dr. Weizmann spared no pains to impress on the Jewish people that all the Declaration did give them was not the country their own as a result of their own work.

While the negotiations for the Declaration were proceeding, two spiritually allied projects were nearing completion: the formation of Halutz movement and the creation of a Jewish Legion to fight for the liberation of Palestine from the Turks. In America, David Ben Gurion and Itzhak Ben Zvi, who had been exiled from Palestine in 1915, created the first group of the Hehalutz and in 1917 they recruited a battalion of American Jewish volunteers to serve with the Allied Forces under Allenby in Egypt and Palestine. In London, Vladimir Jabotinsky, with the support and cooperation of Dr. Weizmann, secured the approval of the British War Office for the recruitment of two battalions in the Royal Fusiliers to serve as Jewish units in Allenby's force. In Russia, Joseph Trumpeldor who in 1915 had created the Zion Mule Corps – the first Jewish military unit in modern times – which saw service in Gallipoli convened the first Hehalutz conference which laid down the program that was to be adopted in the course of time by the World Hehalutz movement. In Palestine itself, despite the expulsion and imprisonments, the persecution and the hunger which had ensued from the hostile attitude of the Turkish authorities to the Jewish community, the community maintained itself in existence as an organized body, waiting for the hour of liberation.

In December 1917 Allenby entered Jerusalem and the South of Palestine was cleared of the enemy. The Jewish Legion entered the country and was joined by a locally recruited battalion in which the moving spirits were the late Dov Hos, Eliyahu Golomb and Berl Katzenelson. The end of the war found an impoverished and shrunken community in Palestine, numbering only about 55,000 souls. But its hopes were high. Its youth was ready for constructive action and the Balfour Declaration seemed to offer the promise of a great new era of development.

Only 20 years after its inauguration the Zionist Movement had attained the essential beginnings for the implementation of its program. It had organized the people; it had amassed a store of practical experience in colonization, defense, communal organization and administration; it had helped to recreate the Hebrew language as the linguistic bond of union for the heterogeneous elements coming into Palestine from all parts of the Diaspora; it had secured the recognition of its existence by all the Allied Powers and an undertaking on their part to help it in the continuation of its work. And all this had been won by a purely voluntary organization whose members joined up on the basis of pure conviction, whose financial system was dependent solely on the generosity of its supporters whom it had no power to tax; whose only strength was that it espoused an ideal rooted in history and dictated by the practical needs of the Jewish people in the modern world. At the end of 1917 the stage was set. The first period in the history of the Zionist Movement was over. It entered a new period in which its task was to convert promise into reality.

The Period of the British Mandate

The period of British Mandatory rule in Palestine can perhaps best be studied by tracing the emergence of the outstanding factors operative during the 28 years of its duration. The factors were:

- (1) The growing deterioration of the Jewish position in Europe;
- (2) The strengthening hold of the Zionist movement on the Jewish masses everywhere;
- (3) The creation in Palestine of a strong and self-reliant national Jewish community;
- (4) A growing tension in the relations between the Yishuv in Palestine and the Arabs of the country;
- (5) The progressive breakdown in the support of the Jewish National Home policy by the British Government.

1. The Jewish Position in Europe

At the end of World War I the Jewish masses in Eastern Europe found themselves comforted by two great hopes; the Balfour Declaration and the promise of the international protection of minorities in the states carved out of the Austro-Hungarian and Czarist Empires.

Actually the political foundations of the Jewish communities in the new democracies in Eastern Europe were very quickly undermined by the closing of the Western world to Jewish

migration was clamped down in the U.S.A. with the result that Jewish immigration trickled down almost to nothing. Similar restrictions were imposed in all overseas countries. Within a very short time the Jews of Eastern Europe were confronted by a raging economic crisis to which they could see no constructive outcome. As general economic conditions deteriorated further during the world crisis in the 1930's, the Jewry of Eastern Europe was subjected to a policy of economic exclusion so systematic and deadly in its results as to merit the name of the "Cold Pogrom".

While the situation was deteriorating in Eastern Europe, the Jews of the German-speaking countries found themselves menaced by the rise of a new, highly organized political anti-Semitism in the form of the National Socialist movement. When Hitler seized power in 1933 it became clear even to the near-sighted that the hour of doom had struck. Between 1919 and 1922, known as the period of the Third Aliyah, some 25,000 Jews entered Palestine, mainly from Eastern Europe. In 1935, 70,000 Jews entered the country in one year, mainly from Poland and Germany; and a large number of aspirants for immigration certificates remained unsatisfied.

The Second World War brought into existence a new psychological situation. During the six years of the war some six million Jews in Europe were done to death by the Nazis and their satellites in a systematic extermination policy without parallel in human history. When the war came to an end in Europe in May 1945, the sole desire of European Jewry was to move itself bodily to Palestine.

The British attempt between 1945 and 1948 to hold up the tide of immigration was broken by the immigrants themselves, who seized every opportunity of making their way to the country without visas or certificates. Even when the ships were turned back from Haifa and their passengers deported to Cyprus, the tide of the "illegals" continued to flow. Between December 1946, when the Cyprus detention camps were opened, and May 1948, when the Mandate came to an end, over 50,000 "illegal" immigrants passed through the Cyprus camps.

2. The Growth of the Zionist Movement

In line with the deterioration of the Jewish position in Europe and the growth of anti-Semitism in overseas countries, the Zionist Movement strengthened its hold on Jewish masses until it became the central and dominant factor in Jewish life.

This commanding position of Palestine in Jewish life received its first clear expression in 1929 with the establishment of the enlarged Jewish Agency. After years of negotiation, leaders of important non-Zionist groups and predominantly non-Zionist community organizations in most countries of the world agreed to come together with the World Zionist Organization in the formation of a central Jewish body combining all Jews, Zionists and non-Zionists alike, who were interested and concerned in the progress of the Jewish National Home. The creation of the Jewish Agency with its status under the Mandate as the body with which the Mandatory Government would consult on all matters affecting the welfare of the Jewish National Home, gave a considerable impetus to the settlement of the country.

In the late 30's the Jewish Agency itself underwent a further change with was again symptomatic of the new trend in Jewish life. By that time, less than ten years after the Jewish

Agency had been formed, the representative Jewish communities in practically every country were led and controlled by Zionists. The distinction between Zionists and non-Zionists in the Agency was becoming increasingly dimmed. By 1947 the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency for Palestine were in practice synonymous terms and the numerous attempts made by the British to bring into play an anti-Zionist Jewish body against the interest of the Zionist movement, failed. When the Palestine question came up before the United Nations, the Zionist movement no longer had to fight an internal opposition inside the Jewish people such as had confronted it at the time of the Balfour Declaration. The President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews was now also a member of the Executive of the Zionist Organization and even the American Jewish Committee which had in the past sharply dissociated itself from the political aims of Zionism, now came out forthrightly in favor of the establishment of a Jewish State.

These developments, however, were slow in starting and valuable time was lost in the critical years after the establishment of the British Civil Administration in Palestine in 1920. Up to the formation of the Jewish Agency in 1929 the practical response to the call of Zionism was limited. At the first post-war World Zionist Conference held in London in 1920, the Keren Hayesod was formed as the financial instrument of the settlement of the Jewish National Home. A five-year program was drawn up calling for the contribution of five million pounds a year for settlement work. The practical results were far and away below the target figure. Indeed it was to take nearly 25 years before the total accumulated income of the Keren Hayesod was to reach the figure of 25 million pounds.

3. The Progress of the Jewish National Home

Between 1920 and 1948 the Jewish community grew in number from 55,000 to about 650,000. The total immigration during the period had been about 420,000, an average of about 14,000 per year.

There had been four more or less distinct movements of migration. Between 1919 and 1922, the Third Aliyah had brought into the country about 25,000 people consisting very largely of young people from Eastern Europe disillusioned by their experiences during the war and the pogroms, without hope that the conditions of Jewry in Europe could ever achieve equilibrium, and convinced that the Jewish National Home offered the only constructive way out. Most of them had been associated with the Hehalutz movement and under their influence the labor movement in Palestine was considerably strengthened. They insisted on the unity of the working class and combined with the men of the Second Aliyah to bring into being the General Federation of Jewish Labor (Histadrut) which was to play a leading role in shaping the economic life of the country.

The new pioneers settled for the most part in Tel-Aviv and Haifa and sent large contingents to work on the roads and in the new settlements being established in the swamps of the Valley of Jezreel. Some of them settled in the Jerusalem area where they created the new suburbs of Beth Hakerem and Talpith and the settlements of Ramat Rachel, Ataroth and Kiryat Anavim.

The next main wave of immigration came in 1924 and 1925. It consisted very largely of middle-class Jews from Poland who had been hard hit by the discriminatory legislation and administrative practice of the Polish Government. This Aliyah settled mainly in Tel-Aviv thus

giving a great impetus to its expansion and development. Much of the energy of this Aliyah was consumed in house-building and trade, but there were some significant developments in industry, too, particularly in textiles.

At this period too, two of the country's key industries were brought beyond the planning stage: the Palestine Electric Corporation, which was to supply the power for industry and irrigation and the Palestine Potash Company which was to exploit the chemical resources of the Dead Sea.

The Fourth Aliyah collapsed in 1926 in an economic crisis due largely to the fact that the Zionist Organization as such did not have at its disposal the investment capital required to absorb labor in urgently needed development projects. In 1927 and 1928 there was a crisis in immigration with as many people leaving the country as coming in. By 1929, however, a new upward tendency revealed itself and though the Arab riots of August 1929 resulted in a temporary setback, the country's economy was once again on an even keel. Immigration continued to flow in steadily.

1933 saw the beginning of what was called the Fifth Aliyah which reached its peak in 1935 with an immigration of some 70,000 mainly from Poland and Germany. A very large percentage of the new immigrants were in the so-called capitalist category disposing of a capital of at least £1000. Until 1937 when it, too, was restricted, the capitalist category was the only one not subject to numerical restriction. Together with the capitalists, however, there came a substantial number of pioneer youth. In 1934 the Youth Aliyah Organization was founded, which has, during the 15 years of its existence, brought over 40,000 boys and girls into the country, the vast majority of whom have reinforced the agricultural pioneering movement.

The Fifth Aliyah has left its marks on every aspect of the country's economy. It gave a particular stimulus to industrial development and to intensive farming on small areas. It brought the citrus industry to the fore as the country's main export branch. During this period, moreover, the financial institutions of the Zionist Organization were for the first time in a position to undertake planned development on a large scale. Galilee, Haifa Bay, the Jordan and Beisan Valleys, the coastal plain of Emek Hephher were added to the map of Jewish settlement activity and the agricultural productive capacity of the country increased by leaps and bounds.

There followed between 1936 and 1939 a period of disturbances and bloodshed which, together with the effects of the deteriorating international situation, had an adverse influence on the progress of the country's economy. Nevertheless even during this period immigration continued to flow in despite restrictions. In 1938 and 1939 "illegal" immigration, planned and organized, was brought into the country. The settlement activity of the national funds continued on a larger scale than ever before. The community held its ground in the face of Arab assault and was able to add to its strength in the process.

The Second World War with its interruption of international communications led to the virtual disappearance of immigration. The whole of Europe was cut off and it was only a few lucky individuals who were able to make good their escape by all kinds of devious routes. The economy of the country, based mainly on the export of citrus fruits, suffered a heavy blow. Building activities came to an end and the latter part of 1939 and 1940 saw the country in the throes of a grave economic crisis. Within a short time, however, the capacity of the Jewish economy to adapt

itself to new circumstances again became apparent. The country's industrial potential came to be recognized as a factor of no mean importance for the war effort in the Middle East, and in 1942 and 1943 Palestine's factories and workshops were engaged to capacity in war production. The isolation of the area resulted in the opening up of new markets in the neighboring countries for goods which had previously been imported from overseas. Meanwhile the British authorities reluctantly began to make use of the country's manpower for the armed forces and by the end of the war some 27000 men and women were serving in the British Army, Navy and Air Force.

With the growth of the Jewish community, its capacity to govern itself and to maintain its own essential services without help from abroad began to be revealed. Already in 1919 the first steps were taken to bring a communal organization into existence. In 1928 the Mandatory Government gave formal legal approval to a country-wide Jewish communal organization, known as the Knesset Israel, with the right to levy taxation on its members for religious and social welfare purposes. The governing body of Knesset Israel was the Assefat Hanivcharim (Elective Assembly), and its supreme executive organ the Vaad Leumi (Jewish National Council). These bodies, elected by universal suffrage, soon came to act as the spokesmen of Palestine Jewry in all matters. At the same time local self-government bodies – municipalities, local councils, regional councils and village committees – came into existence providing the people with a valuable though circumscribed opportunity to develop a tradition of self-government and self-reliance. But over and above these legal and formal opportunities for self-government the community very early on learned the quality of self-discipline and voluntary organization for common objectives. These qualities came to the fore during the testing times of the riots of 1929 and 1936/1939, the emergency of World War II, and the resistance period of 1945/1948. All attempts by the Arabs or the British to drive a wedge into the community failed utterly.

In 1937 the Royal Commission under the chairmanship of Lord Peel was forced to the conclusion that the Jewish community of Palestine was able to stand on its own feet and no longer needed to remain in a position of tutelage. This fact became even more apparent as time passed. As the Mandatory period moved into its twilight, the Yishuv increasingly acted on its own as though it was already a sovereign and independent community.

In 1932 the Vaad Leumi accepted the financial responsibility for the Hebrew educational system of Palestine, which was formally transferred to it by the Zionist Organization. From that day on, the Yishuv assumed a growing share of the financial responsibility for its own social services. By the end of the Mandatory period the funds from abroad were being used almost exclusively for expenditure arising out of the new immigration, so that when the State of Israel came into existence it no longer had to rely on the support of world Jewry for the maintenance of the internal services of the existing population. This fact is now abundantly apparent. The financial responsibility for the reception and absorption of new immigrants rests on the World Zionist Organization. The State has its own budget which is being used not only for financing expenditure on the essential services of the population, but is also, in part, being spent on development projects designed to make room for new immigration.

4. Relations with the Arabs

Immediately after the Balfour Declaration was published Dr. Weizmann secured permission for a Zionist Commission to proceed to Palestine to contact the local community, establish a liaison between it and the British authorities and take the necessary steps for starting the work of constructing a Jewish National Home: Dr. Weizman himself headed the commission. One of the first tasks was to seek ways and means of establishing contacts with the Arabs. At the end of 1918 the Arab forces, in Transjordan. The meeting was most cordial and was followed up by more formal discussions which culminated, in February 1919, in the signing of a treaty by Feisal and Weizmann in the presence of the famous Lawrence of Arabia, in London. The treaty provided for the fullest recognition by the Arabs of Jewish national claims in Palestine, and for close relations between Palestine and the Arab countries. Feisal added a rider in his own handwriting that the treaty would only commit him in the event of the Arab claims to independence outside Palestine being acknowledged by the Allied Powers.

During the course of the deliberations on the peace treaty at Versailles there was very close connection between the Arab delegation and the Zionist leaders who gave their full support to the Arab claims. At one time Feisal addressed a personal letter to Mr. Felix Frankfurter of the American Zionist delegation in order to clear up any misunderstandings that might have arisen as to his attitude to Zionism. In this letter Feisal stated that the Arabs would “give the Jews a hearty welcome home”. There was every reason to suppose the Zionist work in Palestine would not encounter opposition on the part of the Arab population which was still a large majority in the country.

Unfortunately the British authorities did not, from the very outset, make it clear to the local population what their political future would be. From the end of 1917 until May 1920 Palestine was under the control of an Occupied Enemy Territory Administration, which was guided in the main by the standard practice that occupied territory must be governed in accordance with the status quo. The Balfour Declaration policy constituted a serious exception to this practice and therefore led to annoyance and even opposition on the part of the military authorities on the spot. In such an atmosphere it was all too easy for extremist elements among the local Arab population to take heart and to believe that if they showed a sufficient degree of organized opposition to Zionism they might yet succeed in undermining the Balfour Declaration. The military authorities allowed the opposition to organize and imposed no curb on its violence. The result was that in April 1920 and again in May 1921 riots broke out leading to loss of Jewish life and the destruction of Jewish property. Nor was the British reaction to these riots calculated to put down Arab opposition. After the 1921 riots a commission was appointed to examine their causes. The Haycraft Commission, the first of some 20 enquiry commissions which Palestine was fated to endure under Mandatory rule, reported that the riots were caused by the hostility of the Arabs to Zionism, resentment against the “wide powers” granted to the Zionist Commission and their fear that they would be swamped by the influx of Jews. Thus, instead of administering a reproof to the Arabs, the Commission served rather as an instrument for publicizing their arguments. This was to become a regular routine. Equally familiar in retrospect was the fact that the riots were followed by restrictions on Jewish immigration.

After 1921 the Arab opposition to Zionism centered round the notorious figure of Haj Amin al Husseini who in 1920 had been unjustifiably appointed Mufti of Jerusalem and Chairman of the Supreme Moslem Council. Ambitious and unscrupulous, the Mufti used his religious authority for

the building up of a political machine. At first, opposition took the form mainly of demonstrations, particularly during the visit of Earl Balfour for the opening of the Hebrew university in Jerusalem in 1925. As time went on, however, threats of violence became more frequent. Under a strong administration the policy of violence was pressed only verbally. Both Sir Herbert Samuel, the first High Commissioner, and his successor Lord Plummer, were able to keep the situation in hand. After Plumer's departure, however, the comparatively long period of quiet which had ensued since 1921 lulled the authorities into a false sense of security. Despite warnings, the strength of the military force in Palestine was allowed to fall to such a low figure that the lawless opposition could consider itself free to act with impunity. Zionism had not yet fully recovered from the economic crisis of 1926 and 1927. The Jewish Agency was formed in August 1929. The Mufti evidently thought that the time had come to deliver Zionism a death blow before it could gather strength. In August 1929 riots broke out. The Jewish community in Hebron was slaughtered; the villages of Ramat Rachel, Ber Tuvia and Ruhama were destroyed and Safad Jewry escaped complete massacre by a miracle. Throughout the country murder, arson and pillage were let loose. The reaction of the authorities was slow in coming and weak in force. No punitive measures were taken, but once again a commission of inquiry was set up. The Shaw Commission again reported that the riots were due to the Arab fear of displacement. Again immigration was stopped while a new commission under Sir John Hope Simpson investigated whether there was any room in Palestine for Jewish immigration and settlement. The Simpson report was published in October 1930 together with a White Paper which in fact brought the Jewish National Home policy to an end. There was to be no immigration as long as there was any unemployment in the country, Arab or Jewish; there was to be no purchase of land which would lead directly or indirectly to making any Arab landless. There would be room for Jewish immigration only room for development might be on the land but then only on a very small scale. It seemed for a time that the Mufti's policy had won, that the country would be frozen at its existing level of development which would mean in fact its transformation into an Arab State.

The Zionist Organization mobilized its entire political influence throughout the world to ward off this attack against its very existence. In February 1931 the British Government gave way. The White Paper itself was not rescinded, but in a letter to Dr. Weizman the British Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, placed an official interpretation on it which, for all practical intents and purposes, restored the previous position. Immigration was to be permitted up to the economic absorptive capacity of the country and special consideration was to be given to the fact that economic capacity created by Jews and for Jewish purposes should be utilized for the absorbing of Jewish immigration; land purchase was to continue.

After 1931 the practical issues involved in the Palestine question became abundantly clear. The Jews were playing for time. The more immigrants they could bring into the country while its form of permanent government remained unsettled, and the more land they could buy for the settlement of these Jews, the stronger would be their position geographically and numerically when the day of final settlement came. The Arabs launched their political offensive at three main objectives; the stoppage of Jewish immigration, the prohibition of land purchase by Jews, and the immediate establishment of democratic institutions in which Arabs of course would be a clear majority. The period of 1931/1939 marked the culmination of this struggle.

Once again the Arab leadership did not hesitate to use violence to back up its political demands. Confronted by a growing Jewish immigration in 1933, 1934 and 1935, the Arabs came to the conclusion that unless they halted the progress of Zionism immediately they would be overborne by Jewish numerical growth. In 1935, therefore, they presented clear-cut demands for the stoppage of Jewish immigration and land purchase and for the creation of representative government. The British were prepared to act on the basis of these demands. A draft land law was prepared which went a considerable way to meeting Arab representations and a scheme was put forward for the establishment of a legislative Assembly. The Jewish resisted these moves towards appeasement and held their ground. The Arab response was revolt. From April 1935 until the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939 the country was in a considerable state of disorder. Hundreds of Jews lost their lives and much wanton damage to property was caused.

The outbreak of the riots was followed by political reaction more quickly than by physical repression. Before 1936 was out of a new commission, the Royal Commission headed by Lord Peel, was once again investigating the Palestine problem. In July 1937 it presented a report marked by the originality and frankness of its approach. Its main recommendation was the partition of the country into three areas, an Arab State, a Jewish State and British Mandatory enclaves. In the event of these proposals not being accepted, it put forward a series of palliative measures which were fraught with very great menace to the Jewish position. On immigration the Report proposed that a "psychological high level" of Jewish immigration of 12,000 a year be permitted to enter the country, and explained that this represented the gap between the natural increase of the Jewish and the Arab populations. In other words, they were comforting the Arabs by assurances that the Jews would never obtain a majority even should they increase in absolute number, while they condemned the Jews to remain a permanent minority in the country's population. On the land question they emphasized the need for measures to protect the Arab cultivator against displacement and the very fact that they had in their main proposal set aside the greater part of the country as an Arab state, was an invitation to bar this area to Jewish land purchase even in the event of partition not going through.

The Peel Report, though welcomed by the Jews for its frank recognition that the Jews were entitled to a state of their own, was subjected to severe criticism on the ground that the area proposed was quite inadequate. The Arabs, too, slashed the report and even its palliative proposals as an unwarrantable concession to the Jews. Faced by the necessity of making up its mind, the British Government vacillated. Its first reaction was to accept partition as a basis for solution; its next move was to appoint a Partition Commission (the Woodhead Commission) with terms of reference designed to make it quite impossible for it to produce proposals for a viable partition scheme. Having jettisoned partition it made a vain and half-hearted attempt to get the Arabs to sit down with the Jews to discuss the position, while crippling any possibility of negotiating on an equal footing by granting room at the conference table to the representatives of the Arab States who were not directly involved. Encouraged by this weakness, which was interpreted in many quarters as an intention to throw over the Jewish National Home policy, the Arabs maintained an unbroken front of implacable resistance to concession. For a brief period after the partition proposals were accepted in principle by the British Government the Arabs showed a disposition to negotiate and themselves took the initiative in seeking contact with the Jews. But no sooner had the Jewish State policy been abandoned than the Arabs hardened and refused to sit round the same table with the

Jews at the St. James' Palace Conference at the beginning of 1939. They held out for their full demands.

With a new world war on the horizon, fearful of its position everywhere, the Government of Chamberlain, who had come to terms with Hitler, pursued the miserable path of appeasement in the Middle East, too. The outcome of the London Conference was the 1939 white Paper which sounded the death knell of the Balfour Declaration. Land purchase was to be restricted. Jewish immigration was to be limited to 75,000 over a period of five years and thereafter to be permitted only with Arab acquiescence. Within 10 years Palestine was to be run as an independent state in which Arabs would constitute a two-thirds majority.

While the White Paper removed all basis of cooperation between the Jewish Agency and the British Government, it did not succeed in its avowed purpose of appeasing the Arabs. The Mufti had by now silenced the opposition in the Arab camp which felt that short of granting measure of cooperation with the Jewish was possible. The Mufti had made no secret in his appearance before the Palestine Commission of his desire to throw out of Palestine all Jews who had entered the country since 1919. The Mufti could not accept a provision permitting 75,000 Jews to enter, he could not agree to wait for 10 years before assuming power. Haj Amin al Husseini announced his opposition to the White Paper and his determination to fight it. As soon as war broke out the Jews offered their cooperation to the British Government in the war against Hitler; the Mufti chose a different course and became the evil genius of the attempt to sell out the Middle East to the Nazis.

During the period of the war, with the Mufti in exile, practical cooperation between Jews and Arabs became a normal feature. Inter-community trade rose in importance and large number of Jewish and Arab workers engaged by the military authorities on various wartime projects felt they could speak the language of cooperation on the basis of common interest. There can be no doubt that at the end of the war, with the Mufti discredited and the sufferings of the Jewish people in Europe at so high a pitch of tragedy, a measure of concession to Jewish feelings on the part of the British Government would have been accepted by the Arabs without undue opposition. It is clear indeed that the Arabs expected that the White Paper would not be adhered to, particularly after the 1945 General Elections in Great Britain brought into power a Labor Government which was committed to its repeal.

Mr. Bevin's speech in November 1945 took the Arabs as much as the Jews by surprise. They had not expected that they would find in a Labor Government so staunch a supporter. From now on the Jews were to be the trouble-makers and the Arabs were content to stand on the sidelines and watch the contestants fight it out. Beyond continuing their propaganda and uttering dire threats of their reaction to concessions to the Jews, they did nothing. They were prepared to fight the Jews to the last drop of the blood of British policemen and soldiers. Their reality of their threats was exposed when they made no reaction whatsoever to the British announcement that Jewish immigration would be continued after the White Paper limits had been exhausted, at the rate of 1,500 a month. They acquiesced. There was a time when British prestige and rule in Palestine could have been saved by the grant of 4-5000 certificates a month. Such a gesture would have diverted the whole attention of the Jewish community and the Zionist Organization to the constructive tasks which they preferred to the business of resistance. This saving gesture did not come. The

Government of Great Britain served as the spokesman of the Arab cause, removing every vestige of hope that the Arabs would ever have any inducement to come to terms with the Jews.

5. Relations with Great Britain

The story of the Mandatory period is that of the deterioration in relations between Great Britain and the Zionist movement. It is little remembered today in the outside world that it was the Zionist Organization more than any other factor which was instrumental in the appointment of Great Britain as the Mandatory power. In the balance sheet of history that cannot be forgotten.

In 1922, a month before the final draft of the Mandate was confirmed by the League of Nations, Mr. Churchill, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, issued a White Paper defining what Britain meant by a Jewish National Home. It was to be a center in which world Jewry could take pride; it was not to be “as Jewish as England is English”, in Dr. Weizmann’s phrase, but it was to be given an opportunity to expand by means of immigration not exceeding the absorptive capacity of the country. From that day until 1939 the Zionist movement sought a basis for cooperation with Great Britain. They received many blows and were prepared to view every proposal in a mood of moderation and even concession, so long as they retained the right to immigration and settlement. These were the things that would enable the Jewish National Home to grow; without them the National Home policy had no meaning. When these twin props of Zionist work were removed by Lord Passfield’s White Paper of 1930, Dr. Weizmann, the leading exponent of the possibility of cooperating with Great Britain, resigned. The White Paper of 1939 brought the possibility of cooperation which had been renewed by the McDonald letter of 1931, to an end. But for the intervention of the war, Jewish resistance against the White Paper would have begun immediately. The war held it off, and immediately, after the liberation of Europe there was hope that the election of a Labor Government in Great Britain would bring about a change of Britain’s attitude. With this hope defeated, the Jewish resistance movement swung into action.

The main sphere of resistance was in immigration. British policy was to keep Jews out: Jewish policy was to bring them in. The “illegal” immigration movement – the Haapalah – presented Britain in a most unfavorable light before the bar of world opinion and landed her with a total accumulation of over 50,000 Jews who passes through the Cyprus Detention Camps.

To deal with the situation, a large percentage of Britain’s total land forces had to be moved to Palestine where their maintenance proved to be a costly business. There was a rising sentiment in favor of British evacuation from Palestine, which was first put into words by Mr. Winston Churchill in a forthright demand that Britain move out and hand the problem back to the United Nations, the successor to the defunct League of Nations. Before this was to happen, Britain endeavored to involve America in a last attempt to make the Mandate work. In 1946 The Anglo-American Enquiry Commission came to the country and unanimously recommended a series of ten proposals based on the assumption that the Mandatory regime would continue. The first of these suggestions was that 100,000 Jews should be permitted to enter the country; there was also a proposal designed to remove much of the sting from the White Paper prohibition of land purchase in most of the country.

This was Britain's last chance. With American support she could have imposed this policy. She preferred temporize, unwilling or afraid to accept the proposal of allowing 100,000 Jews into the country. The resistance movement gave its answer in May 1946 by launching the biggest show of strength it had yet permitted itself.

The British counter-reply on June 19, 1946, was to arrest the leaders of the Jewish Agency, conduct a lightning search for members of the Palmach* in the Kibbutzim, occupy the Jewish Agency Headquarters in Jerusalem and threaten the country with martial law. A few months later a revised Anglo-American plan, the Morrison-Grady Plan, was announced by Mr. Herbert Morrison in the British House of Commons, providing for Jewish autonomy in a tiny strip of territory leading from Lake Huleh through the Valley of Jezreel to the coastal plain between Haifa and Tel-Aviv. The plan was rejected by the Zionist movement and the Yishuv; it was rejected by the Government of the United States. The Yishuv stood its ground, remained true to its leadership and showed a degree of patience and discipline so strong as to force the Government by the end of the year to release the leaders of the Jewish Agency and offer them a further opportunity for negotiations. These negotiations took place at the beginning of 1947; they failed. The British had nothing to offer that was worth considering. The Arabs were not prepared to relax by one particle the extreme opposition to concession that had been induced in them by decades of political pampering. With conditions in Palestine deteriorating from day to day, with ship after ship of "illegals" arriving in Haifa, to be deported to Cyprus, Mr. Bevin bowed to British opinion and announced that Britain would raise the Palestine question before the United Nations and accept the United Nations' verdict.

On May 14, 1947, the General Assembly of the United Nations resolved to appoint a Special Committee on Palestine to present Proposals for the solution of the Palestine problem. The Committee visited Palestine and on August 1, 1947, presented a majority report recommending the partition of the country into Arab and Jewish States with an internationalized enclave in Jerusalem and its vicinity, and an Economic union combining the three parts. On November 29, 1947, the General Assembly adopted a revised version of this scheme. British Mandatory rule was to expire on the 15th May, 1948. The remaining days of British Mandatory Government in Palestine were devoted to the creation of deliberate chaos and avoidable confusion. The Government did everything it could, short of open, military disadvantage, in the hope or expectation that when the Mandate ended the Arabs would finish the job. But events turned out otherwise.

* Palmach – the striking force of the Hagana.