

**The Jewish Plan for Palestine
(1947)**

Memoranda and Statements
Presented by
THE JEWISH AGENCY FOR PALESTINE
To the
United Nations Special Committee on Palestine
THE JEWISH AGENCY FOR PALESTINE
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STATEMENT OF MR. D. BEN GURION
PP.295-386

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, first of all I wish to congratulate your Committee on the procedure you have adopted in conducting your inquiry, of seeing things for yourselves before hearing oral evidence. While the limited time may have prevented you from seeing more, I believe that direct contact with realities in Palestine will help you more than anything else to understand at least a part of the problem which you have to study. On behalf of the Jewish people I wish to express our sincerest wish that your mission may be successful in reaching the full truth of the problem you have been set, and a maximum of justice in its solution.

We have had a rather long and disappointing experience of numerous commissions of inquiry which were sent to Palestine by the Mandatory Government to inquire into things perfectly well known to everybody and to make recommendations which remained on paper. This explains why many people here are rather skeptical about the value of all these inquiries. We are still baffled by what happened to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry last year, which was publicized beforehand as a tremendous achievement by the present Government in London, and whose unanimous recommendations were later shelved contemptuously by that same Government. And if, in spite of all that, we heartily welcome this new inquiry, it is not because we have any reason to believe that on this occasion the Mandatory Government will respect your views any more than those of your predecessors. The official statements made by spokesmen of the Mandatory Power whether in the House of Commons or in the Special Assembly of the United Nations in May this year, do not encourage such a belief overmuch.

Welcome to United Nations Committee

We welcome this inquiry committee because it has been sent by the United Nations. It is fitting that this highest international forum in the world should deal with these twin problems of the Jews and Palestine, as they both are international in their character. There is hardly a country in the world, perhaps, with the exception of the countries in the Far East from India to Japan, which has no direct concern with the Jewish problem, and Palestine is certainly not a matter for Britain alone, which is here only as temporary trustee to carry out an international mandate under specific conditions and with a specific purpose. The settlement of these twin problems is perhaps the supreme test of the United Nations, a test both of their freedom and ability to deal with an issue involving as it does a conflict between a small, weak people and a powerful world

empire; to deal with it not as a matter of power politics and political expediency, but as a question of justice and equity, as far as these are attainable in human affairs, and in accordance with the merits of the case.

The United Nations in our view embody the most ardent hope and the most vital needs of the peoples of the world – a hope and a need for peace, stable and lasting peace, which is possible only if based on justice, equality and cooperation between nations great and small; a hope and a need for comprehensive international system establishing relations between peoples on the rule of right instead of might, of mutual help instead of competition, of freedom, equality and good will instead of oppression, discrimination and exploitation. The Jewish people, no less than any other people in the world, is deeply anxious for these ideals to prevail, and that for two reasons – because of our spiritual heritage and tradition, and because of our unique position in the world.

International Peace a Jewish

The gospel of lasting peace, brotherhood and justice as between nations was proclaimed thousands of years ago by the Jewish prophets in this country, perhaps in this very city, the eternal city in which you are now holding your inquiry. More than 3,300 years ago, when our ancestors were on their way from the House of Bondage in Egypt to the Promised Land, they were taught by our lawgiver and the greatest of our prophets the supreme command for men on earth – “thou shalt love thy fellow-men as thyself”, and that if “a stranger sojourn with you in your land... that stranger shall be unto you as one home-born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt”.

The prophets who followed Moses – Isaiah, Hosea, Micah and others – proclaimed the gospel of social justice and international brotherhood and peace. They left us the vision of a future when the people “shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks, nation shall not lift sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

The teachings and ideals of our prophets, together with the peculiar nature of our country, the uniqueness of its structure and its geographical position, all shaped the character of our people and its civilization, and made us perhaps the most exclusive and the most universal of nations, since ancient times up to the present. When we were still living independently in our country we clashed with the civilizations of great and powerful neighbors, first Egypt and Babylon, then Greece and Rome, who tried to crush our individuality and assimilate us among them. With an indomitable obstinacy we always preserved our identity. Our entire history is a history of continuous resistance to superior physical forces which tried to wipe out our Jewish image and to uproot our connections with our country and with the teaching of our prophets. We did not surrender, we never surrender to sheer physical force deprived of moral validity. We paid a dear price for our resistance. We lost our independence. We were dispossessed of our homeland. We were exiled to strange lands. The pressure against us in the Diaspora was even stronger and still we persevered.

The Problem of Homelessness

On the first point I shall confine myself to a few remarks. You are faced with a tragic problem, perhaps *the* tragic problem of our time and of many generations, of a people which was twice forcibly driven out of its country and which never acquiesced in its dispossession, and

although it was its bitter destiny to wander in exile for many centuries, always remained attached with all its heart and soul to its historic homeland. It is a unique fact in world history, but it is a real, living, incontestable fact. During your short visit to this country you have seen, I believe, some manifestations of this deep attachment. You have seen Jews from all parts of the world – the call of the homeland brought them here – who with passionate devotion to the soil of their ancestors are endeavoring to regenerate a people and a land. An unbroken tie between our people and our land has persisted through all these centuries in full force, because of two fundamental historical facts: first, this country has remained largely desolate and waste while possessing great potentialities for development, given the need, skill, means and devotion for their realization; second, Jewish homelessness and insecurity in the Diaspora, which is the underlying cause of all Jewish suffering and persecution. Jewish misery may vary from time to time, it may become more or less acute, but it never ceases. Jewish insecurity originates in three fundamental disabilities of Jews throughout the world; they are deprived of statehood, they are homeless and they are in a minority position everywhere. Unless and until these three disabilities are completely and lastingly remedied, there is no hope for the Jewish people, nor can there be justice in the world.

The homelessness and minority position make the Jews always dependent on the mercy of others. The “others” may be good and may be bad, and the Jews may sometimes be treated more or less decently, but they are never masters of their own destiny’ they are entirely defenseless when the majority of people turn against them. What happened to our people in this war is merely a climax to the uninterrupted persecution to which we have been subjected for centuries by almost all the Christian and Moslem peoples in the old world.

There were and there are many Jews who could not stand it, and they deserted us. They could not stand the massacres and expulsions, the humiliation and discrimination, and they gave it up in despair. But the Jewish people as a whole did not give way, did not despair or renounce its hope and faith in a better future, national as well as universal.

Jewish People’s Rightful Place

And here we are, not only we, the Jews of Palestine, but the Jews throughout the world – the small remnant of European Jewry and the Jews in other countries. We claim our rightful place under the sun as human beings and as a people, the same right as other human beings and *peoples possess, the right to security, freedom, equality*, statehood and membership in the United Nations. No individual Jew can be really free, secure and equal anywhere in the world as long as the Jewish people, as a people, is not again rooted in its own country as an equal independent nation.

An international undertaking was given to the Jewish people some thirty years ago in the Balfour Declaration and in the Mandate for Palestine, to reconstitute our national home in our ancient homeland. This undertaking originated with the British people and the British Government. It was supported and confirmed by 52 nations, and embodied in an international instrument known as the Mandate for Palestine. The Charter of the United Nations seeks to maintain “justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law”. Is it too presumptuous on our part to expect that the United Nations will see that obligations to the Jewish people too are respected and faithfully carried out in the spirit and the letter?

Unequal Conflict

This brings me to the second phase of the problem, the conflict between the Mandatory Power and the Jewish people. It is a very sad and very painful conflict for us. It is a conflict of two unequal parties.

On the one hand a great world power, possessing tremendous military, economic, territorial and political resources, linked in a community of interest and alliance with a great number of large and small peoples, enjoying, deservedly, great moral prestige for the heroic part it played in the last war, wielding unlimited power in this country, backed as it is by large military forces on land, at sea and in the air.

On the other hand, a stateless, homeless, defenseless, small people with nothing but the graves of six million dead, hundreds of thousands of homeless and displaced persons, having to rely only on its own constructive will and creative effort, on the justice of its case and the intrinsic value of its work, on its natural and historic right to its ancient homeland, where the first foundations have already been laid for a regenerated Jewish Commonwealth. What is the nature of the conflict?

Britain and the Jews

Palestine is not part of the British Empire. Great Britain is here as a mandatory to give effect to the internationally guaranteed pledges given to the Jewish people in the Balfour Declaration.

It will be to the everlasting credit of the British people that it was the first in modern times to undertake the restoration of Palestine to the Jewish people. Jews in Britain were and are treated as equals. A British Jew can be and has been a member of the Cabinet, a Chief Justice, a Viceroy, and can occupy any other place in the political and economic life of the country. Only those who in such a way could respect the rights of the Jews as individuals could also recognize the rights of Jews as a people. The Balfour Declaration was in the first place a public recognition of the Jews as a people, in the second place a recognition of the Jewish people's right to a national home and in the third place a recognition of a national home not merely for Jews, but for the Jewish people in its entirety.

The Balfour Declaration did not come out of the blue. British statesmen and thinkers, such as Lord Byron, George Elliot, Lord Shaftesbury, Lord Beaconsfield and others, had long taken a great interest in the national revival of the Jews in Palestine. In 1902, the British Government set up a Royal Commission to inquire into the question of aliens in Britain. Dr. Herzl, whose book on "The Jewish State as the only solution of the Jewish problem" was epoch-making in our history and who became the founder of modern Zionism, was invited by His Majesty's Government to give evidence before that Commission. His statement at the hearings that "the solution of the Jewish difficulty is the recognition of the Jews as a people and the finding by them of a legally-recognized home, to which Jews in those parts of the world where they are oppressed would naturally migrate" fell on fertile soil, and met with deep sympathy in the British Government. Palestine was then still part of the Ottoman Empire, so Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, offered Uganda to the Jews. While our

people was deeply grateful for such an unprecedented offer, it was not the Land of Israel. It was Russian and East European Jews who were mainly responsible for the rejection, in spite of the fact that the plight of our people in many countries and especially in Czarist Russia was at that time desperate. The British Government then offered the Zionists an alternative, a large area on the border of Palestine known as El Arish, which had been detached from Ottoman rule. This plan, too, came to nothing, because of lack of water, and it was only the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in the first world war which gave the British an opportunity to restore Palestine to the Jews.

The Declaration of Cyrus

The Balfour Declaration was not the first of its kind, just as this is not our first return. After the destruction of our first commonwealth by the Assyrians and Babylonians, the Persian king Cyrus the Great in the year 538 B.C. made the first “Balfour Declaration”, as we are told in the Book of Ezra:

“In the first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, king of Persia, that he made a proclamation to the Jews throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, ‘Thus saith Cyrus, king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord, the God of heaven, given me; and He hath charged me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whosoever there is among you of all His people – his God be with him – let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord”

The Balfour Declaration

Exactly 2,455 years after the Declaration of Cyrus, another was issued by Mr. Balfour, on behalf of H.M. Government, on November 2, 1917. I can safely assume that all of you are acquainted with the text of that document, but I must draw your attention to the first and last sentences, which are sometimes omitted when the document is quoted. The opening is this: “Dear Lord Rothschild, I have much pleasure in conveying to you on behalf of His Majesty’s Government the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations, which has been submitted to and approved by the Cabinet”. And the last sentence reads: “I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation”. The text of this declaration had been submitted to President Wilson and had been approved by him before its publication. The first people after Britain and America to associate itself with this declaration was Yugoslavia, or as it was then called, Serbia (27th December, 1917). Then came the confirmation of France (9th February, 1918), Italy (9th Ma, 1918), China (14th December, 1918) and many others. The Emir Feisal, representing the Arabs at the Peace Conference on behalf of his father, the Sherif of Mecca, gave it his blessing.

“The field in which the Jewish National Home was to be established was understood, at the time of the Balfour Declaration, to be the whole of historic Palestine”,¹ stated the Royal Commission for Palestine of 1937. That is to say, it included Transjordan. The meaning of the National Home was at that time made abundantly clear by the authors of the Declaration. Mr.

¹ Palestine Royal Commission Report, 1937, Chapter II, para. 42.

Lloyd George, who was Prime Minister at the time, testified: “The idea was...that a Jewish State was not be set up immediately by the Peace Treaty...It was contemplated that...if the Jews had meanwhile responded to the opportunity...and had become a definite majority of the inhabitants, then Palestine would thus become a Jewish Commonwealth”.² The Royal Commission for Palestine, which examined the records bearing upon the question, stated in its report that “His Majesty’s Government evidently realized that a Jewish State might in course of time be established, but it was not in a position to say that this would happen, still less to bring it about of its own motion”.³ The Commission goes on to cite the authors of the Declaration. President Wilson, Lord Robert Cecil, General Smuts, Sir Herbert Samuel and others spoke or write in terms that could only mean that they contemplated the eventual establishment of a Jewish state.

Scope of National Home

There are also records pointing to the numerical size of the National Home. George Adam Smith, a great scholar whose book on the “Historical Geography of the Holy Land” is a classic on the subject and as far as I know is the best book on Palestine in any language, in 1918, when the first world war was still in progress, published a pamphlet on “Syria and the Holy Land. Discussing (on page 46) the nature of the Jewish desire to return to Palestine he wrote:

“Towards the fulfillment of a national restoration Zionists reckon, not without reason, on the migration of millions of Jews to Palestine. However Jewry may be divided in opinion as to the shape which that restoration should take, there is little doubt that, given freedom to return and possess land under their own laws, Jews would resort to Palestine in sufficient numbers to form a nation. Moreover, there is room for them in the country; from what we have seen, its capacity to support them is not to be denied, nor, as their colonies have shown, can we doubt their ability to develop this.”

Mr. Winston Churchill, in a statement published on the 8th of February, 1920, said:

“If, as may well happen, there should be created in our own lifetime by the banks of the Jordan a Jewish State under the protection of the British Crown, which might comprise three or four millions of Jews, an event will have occurred in the history of the world which would from every point of view be beneficial, and would be especially in harmony with the truest interests of the British Empire.”¹

And what is perhaps especially significant in this respect is the agreement concluded between the Emir Feisal and Dr. Weizmann on January 3, 1919. Article 4 of the agreement lays down that

“All necessary measures shall be taken to encourage and stimulate immigration of Jews into Palestine on a large scale, and as quickly as possible to settle Jewish immigrants upon the land through closer settlement and intensive cultivation of the soil.”

² Ibid, para. 20.

³ Ibid, para. 21

¹ Illustrated Sunday Herald, Feb. 8th, 1920, p.5.

The White Paper of 1922

In 1922, before the Mandate for Palestine had been approved by the League of Nations, the first White Paper on Palestine, the so-called Churchill White Paper, was published. It contains correspondence between His Majesty's Government, the Arab Delegation and the Zionist Organization and a statement on policy in Palestine. In a letter to the Arab Delegation dated March 1, 1922, it is stated: "The position is that His Majesty's Government are bound by a pledge (the Balfour Declaration) which is antecedent to the Covenant of the League of Nations, and they cannot allow a constitutional position to develop in a country for which they have accepted responsibility to the Principal Allied Powers, which may make it impracticable to carry into effect a solemn undertaking given by themselves and their Allies."²

The statement points out that the Jewish National Home in Palestine does not mean "the imposition of a Jewish nationality upon the inhabitants of Palestine as a whole, but the further development of the existing Jewish community, with the assistance of Jews in other parts of the world...In order that this community should have the best prospect of free development and provide a full opportunity for the Jewish people to display its capacities, it is essential that it should know that it is in Palestine as of right and not on sufferance. That is the reason why it is necessary that the existence of a Jewish National Home in Palestine should be internationally guaranteed, and that it should be formally recognized to rest upon ancient historic connection."³

The Royal Commission, in examining this statement, declared:

"This definition of the National Home has sometimes been taken to preclude the establishment of a Jewish State. But, though the phraseology was clearly intended to conciliate, as far as might be, Arab antagonism to the National Home, there is nothing in it to prohibit the ultimate establishment of a Jewish State, and Mr. Churchill himself has told us in evidence that no such prohibition was intended."⁴

The Mandate

On July the 24th, 1922, the Mandate for Palestine was confirmed by the Council of the League of Nations. The Mandate embodied the Balfour Declaration, and it added a meaningful amplification. After citing in a preamble the text of the Declaration it added: "Recognition has thereby been given to the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine and to the grounds for reconstituting" (not constituting) "their national home in that country."

In commenting on the Mandate and its obligations, the Royal Commission makes the following observation:

² Cmd. 1700, 1922, p.6.

³ Ibid., p. 19.

⁴ Palestine Royal Commission Report, 1937, Chapter II, para. 39.

“Unquestionably the primary purpose of the Mandate, as expressed in its preamble and its articles, is to promote the establishment of the Jewish National Home.”⁵

Royal Commission Report

In 1936 large-scale Arab riots broke out, which later received the help of the Axis partners. A Royal Commission was then sent out “to ascertain the underlying causes of the disturbances”, “to inquire into the manner in which the Mandate for Palestine is being implemented”, and “to ascertain whether...either the Arabs or the Jews have any legitimate grievances” against “the way the Mandate... is being implemented.”

The Commission found “that though the Arabs have benefitted by the development of the country owing to Jewish immigration, this has had no conciliatory effect. On the contrary, improvement in the economic situation in Palestine has meant the deterioration of the political situation.”⁶ The Commission did not think that “the obligations Britain undertook towards the Arabs and the Jews some twenty years ago have lost in moral or legal weight through what has happened since”, but the “the trouble is that they have proved irreconcilable.”⁷ The Mandate was unworkable. They therefore reached the conclusion that the only solution lay in the partition of the country into two states, a Jewish and an Arab State.

The main advantages, according to the Royal Commission, of partition to the Arabs are (1) they will obtain their national independence (2) they will finally be delivered from the fear of being “swamped” by the Jews. The advantages of partition for the Jews are, in the view of the Commission, (1) that it relieves the National Home from the possibility of its being subjected in the future to Arab rule, and (2) that it enables the Jews in the fullest sense to call their national home their own, for it converts it into a Jewish State. “Its citizens will be able to admit as many Jews into it as they themselves believe can be absorbed. They will attain the primary objective of Zionism – a Jewish nation, planted in Palestine, giving its nationals the same status in the world as other nations give theirs.”⁸

Zionist Congress and Partition Proposal

The Zionist Congress which assembled after the publication of the Royal Commission’s report considered its proposals, which had been approved by His Majesty’s Government. A considerable minority was for rejecting the plan in principle, as inconsistent with the obligations to the Jewish people, its historic rights, and its vital interests. The majority was opposed to the concrete proposals of the Commission mainly for two reasons: that the Negev, the unsettled and uncultivated part of Southern Palestine was excluded, as well as Jerusalem. Everybody admitted that the Holy Places should be internationally safeguarded and that the Old City of Jerusalem required a special regime. But there were very grave objections to the exclusion of Jewish Jerusalem from the Jewish State. At the same time the majority decided to empower the

⁵ Ibid., para. 42.

⁶ Ibid., Chapter XIX, para. 1.

⁷ Ibid., Chapter XX, para. 17.

⁸ Ibid, Chapter XXII, para. 3.

Executive to negotiate with the Government, and if a satisfactory plan for a Jewish state emerged it would be submitted to a Congress, to be elected, for decision.

The White Paper of 1939

A year later, in May 1939, an entirely new policy was inaugurated, which actually scrapped the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate – the policy of the White Paper of 1939, which can be briefly summarized in the following three principles:

1. Jews to remain a permanent minority not to exceed a third of the population. After the admission of another 75,000 immigrants over the next 5 years, “no further Jewish immigration will be permitted unless the Arabs of Palestine are prepared to acquiesce in it.”
2. Jews not to be allowed to acquire land and to settle except in a very limited area of Palestine.
3. Within ten years an independent Palestine state to be established, in such treaty relations with the United Kingdom as will provide satisfactorily for the commercial and strategic requirements of both countries in the future.

In February, 1940, in pursuance of the new policy, a new Land Ordinance was promulgated, which established three zones in Palestine: Zone A, comprising 6,415 square miles, 63.2% of the total area of Western Palestine, where a Jew is prohibited from acquiring land, water, buildings, trees, or any interest or right over land, water, buildings or trees by purchase, lease, mortgage, charge or any other disposition. Zone B, comprising some 3,225 square miles, 31.8% of the total, is the restricted zone; there special permission in writing from the High Commissioner, which he may grant or refuse at his unfettered discretion, is necessary if a Jew wants to acquire lands, buildings, trees etc., from an Arab. The third Zone, where the Jews are free to buy land, is only 5% of the area of Palestine.

When the White Paper quota of 75,000 immigrants was exhausted at the end of the war, the present Government fixed a political maximum of 1,500 a month, in keeping with the White Paper of 1939, that the Jewish population should not exceed approximately a third of the total.

White Paper Condemned by the Jewish People

In the memorandum presented to you by the Government of Palestine on the “Administration of Palestine under the Mandate” you are told that the two measures under the White Paper, the prohibition of Jewish settlement on land the arbitrary limitation of immigration, have been bitterly resented by the Jews, who have represented that they are contrary to His Majesty’s Government’s obligations under the Mandate. This is one of the half-truths in which that document abounds. It is quite true that the Jewish people, as stated by the Jewish Agency on may 17, 1939, the day that the White Paper was issued, ‘regard this breach of faith as a surrender to Arab terrorism. It delivers Great Britain’s friends into the hands of those who are fighting her. It must widen the breach between Jews and Arabs, and undermine the hope of peace in Palestine.

It is a policy in which the Jewish people will not acquiesce. The new regime announced in the White Paper will be devoid of any moral basis and contrary to international law. Such a regime can only be set up and maintained by force". But it was not quite accurate, as the memorandum seems to indicate, that it is merely a Jewish assertion that the White Paper violated the Mandate.

--and by the Mandates Commission

The Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations, the only international institution which was asked by the Mandatory to consider the proposals of the White Paper, declared unanimously 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 (of the League of Nations), the Commission had always placed upon the Palestine Mandate."⁹ The majority of the Commission, the chairman, M. Orts, from Belgium, the vice-chairman, Professor Rappard from Switzerland, Baron van Asbeck from Holland and Mademoiselle Dannevig from Norway, declared that the very terms of the Mandate and the fundamental intentions of its authors ruled out any conclusion that the policy of the White Paper was in conformity with the Mandate.

--and by British Statesmen

But it was not only the Permanent Mandates Commission which condemned the White Paper. In a debate in the House of Commons on May 23rd, 1939, Mr. Herbert Morrison, now Lord President of the Council in the Labor Government, declared bluntly on behalf of the Labor Party: "We regard this White Paper and the policy in it as a cynical breach of pledges given to the Jews and the world, including America". Mr. Clement Attlee, the present Prime Minister, said "The action of the Government (of Mr. Chamberlain) in making themselves the judge of their own case, in taking action contrary to the Permanent Mandates Commission's decision, and in disregarding the Council of the League of Nations, will cause...very wide feeling that instead of acting up to their obligations under the Mandate, they are flouting the authority of the League and international law."¹⁰

The Labor Party, at its annual conference in Southport in 1939, accepted a resolution to the same effect.

Mr. Winston Churchill was not less outspoken in his criticism of the White Paper. He said: "I regret very much that the pledge of the Balfour Declaration, endorsed as it has been by successive Governments, and the conditions under which we obtained the Mandate, have both been violated by the Government's proposals (of the White Paper)...To whom was the pledge of the Balfour Declaration made? It was not made to the Jews of Palestine, it was not made to those who were actually living in Palestine. It was made to world Jewry and in particular to the Zionist associations."¹¹

The Archbishop of Canterbury in the House of Lords pointed out that the White Paper imposed a minority status on the Jews in Palestine. "They (the Jews)", he said, "shall return in their National Home to that minority status which has been their lot through long centuries in every part of the world....Whatever a National Home may have meant...it surely cannot have meant that."¹²

⁹ Minutes, Permanent Mandates Commission, 36th Session, 1949, p. 275.

¹⁰ House of Commons, Feb. 28th, 1940.

¹¹ House of Commons, May 23rd, 1939.

¹² House of Lords, May 23rd, 1939.

Labor Against Land Regulations

When the Land Regulations of 1940 were discussed in the House of Commons, Mr. Philip Noel-Baker, the present Secretary of State for Air in the Labor Government, introduced on behalf of the Labor Party a motion which read as follows:

“That this House regrets that, disregarding the expressed opinion of the Permanent Mandates Commission that the policy contained in the White Paper on Palestine was inconsistent with the terms of the Mandate, and without the authority of the Council of the League of Nations, His Majesty’s Government have authorized the issue of regulations controlling the transfer of land which discriminate unjustly against one section of the inhabitants of Palestine.”¹³

In his speech, Mr. Noel-Baker stated: “A year ago, the Arab Delegation told the London Conference that there were 19 million dunams of land in Palestine which they could not cultivate. The Jews have already begun to show that they can cultivate it.”¹⁴ This would have to stop because it was the prohibited zone. And he gave economic, political and moral reasons against the racial discrimination.

Racial Laws

Seven years have passed since then, Hitler has been destroyed and the Nuremberg Laws are abolished in the whole of Europe. Palestine is now the only place in the civilized world where racial discrimination still exists in law. Even if there were no National Home we should not acquiesce in such discrimination. We should not acquiesce in being deprived of the elementary right of citizens, the right of free movement and settlement in the country in which we live, of being deprived of equality before the law. But this is our National Home. Eighty generations lived and died with the hope of Zion. A great people and the entire civilized world recognized our right to reconstitute our National Home here. And now the same Government that was charged with that sacred trust of promoting the Jewish National Home has put us into a territorial ghetto, condemned us to live as in Czarist Russia in a pale of settlement. In our long history we have suffered many cruel persecutions, but to be locked up in a ghetto in our own country, to be debarred from our own ancestral soil, lying derelict and waste, such cruel torment even we have not hitherto experienced. Is it conceivable that the United Nations should allow these racial laws to exist in the Holy Land for a single day after the matter was referred to them? The Anglo-American Committee, headed by two judges, one British and one American, unanimously requested “that the Land Transfers Regulations of 1940 be rescinded.” That decision was published on April 20, 1946. The racial land law still exists.

The racial law is not merely a flagrant breach of international obligations under the Mandate. It gravely endangers the status of Jews throughout the world. If the Mandatory Government can enact racial discrimination against Jews in their own homeland, why should not other Governments, who are not bound by such international obligations, be allowed to enact similar racial laws against Jews everywhere? The racial boycott which the Arab League has

¹³ House of Commons, March 6th, 1940.

¹⁴ Ibid.

proclaimed against Jewish goods is not entirely unconnected with the racial land law enacted by the mandatory Power. And even before an Arab State has been established in Palestine, the Arab Higher Committee and the Arab League have requested that not only should the existing racial land restrictions remain in the new Palestine State, but that the constitution should provide that this discrimination cannot be removed even by a majority in Parliament, but only by a majority of Arab members of the Legislative Assembly. This is the civic education given to the non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine and to the Arab people in the neighboring countries by the mandatory Power.

Immigration Restrictions a Mortal Blow

I shall now turn to the second restriction, that on immigration. When the White Paper was introduced in 1939, Mr. Churchill said that this was a mortal blow to the Jewish people. I am sorry to say he did not exaggerate. The White Paper, in closing the gates of Palestine to Jews in the hour of their greatest peril, is responsible for the death of tens of thousands, perhaps of hundreds of thousands of Jews who could have been saved from the gas-chambers had Palestine been open to them. Just before the war we applied to the Colonial Secretary for permission to bring over 20,000 Jewish children from Poland, and 10,000 youth from the Balkan countries. Permission was refused and those 20,000 Jewish children and the 10,000 youth were put to death. There were times when Jews could still escape from Nazi-occupied territories, but the gates of their National Home were closed by the Mandatory Power and they were sent to their deaths in Dachau and Treblinka.

The "Struma"

I do not know whether you remember the case of the "Struma". It was a small ship which left Rumania at the end of December 1941, with 769 refugees. Rumania was then under Nazi occupation. The position of Jews there as in other Nazi-occupied countries, was desperate. Jews, old and young, women and children, were herded into goods-trains and dispatched to unknown destinations, which meant death in gas-chambers somewhere in Poland. On many occasions they were collected in the streets and machine-gunned on the spot. In the city of Jassy alone 8,000 Jews were assembled in the market-place and machine-gunned in cold blood. Whoever could do so tried to escape to the sea. The "Struma" was a cattle-boat which had originally been built for navigation on the Danube. The 769 refugees who managed to reach it did not care very much about the amenities of sea-travel; to get to Palestine or not meant life or death. The trip from the port of embarkation in Rumania to Istanbul took four days. The passengers were not allowed to land in Turkey, as they had no visas either for Turkey or for their final destination. All the efforts of the Jewish Agency to get permission from the Government for them to enter Palestine were of no avail. The Agency was not even allowed to allot the certificates in their possession to these unfortunate people, the reason given being that they were enemy subjects. The agony dragged on for more than two months. On February 18 the Government agreed to allow children below the age of 11 to land, but it was already too late. The boat had to leave Istanbul. On February 24, the "Struma" went down with 764 passengers.

The refugees of the "Struma" were not the only direct victims of the White Paper, nor did all the refugee victims who came in ships die by drowning. Some of them were killed by His Majesty's Forces. A few were killed on the eve of the war, on September 1, 1939, when the ship

“Tiger Hill” reached the shores of Tel-Aviv and was fired on. More recently, in May 1947, three refugees were killed on the ship “Theodor Herzl” which was intercepted by His Majesty’s Navy.

“Slave Trade” or Dunkirk”?

In a debate in the House of Lords on April 23rd last, a noble Lord, Lord Altricham (formerly Sir Edward Grigg), who had been British representative in the Middle East during the war, expressed his horror and disgust at illegal immigration into Palestine. His Lordship called the desperate attempts of refugees in the camps of Europe to reach their homeland a traffic “carried on under conditions which really resemble the old slave trade across the Atlantic”. He knew that “the human cargoes...do start out borne up by hope, but that hope is doomed to end in the most terrible disillusionment”. He calls this unauthorized escape to Palestine an “inhuman process”, “disgusting’ and disgraceful”.

I happened to be in London in the darkest hours of the war for Britain, when France had collapsed and Belgium surrendered, when Britain stood alone and the small remnant of the British Army on the Continent was desperately trying to get back through Dunkirk. They did not wait for the luxury of the “Queen Mary” and the “Queen Elizabeth”, nor did they care about the seaworthiness of the ramshackle, filthy little boats which assembled from all parts of England to save that valiant remnant. All the British people were proud of Dunkirk, and rightly so. It was a great military disaster turned into a greater moral triumph.

We suffered a greater disaster in Europe than the British Army. Not a few thousands, not tens of thousands, but millions, six millions were put to death. Can anybody realize what that means? What that means to us? Can anyone realize – a million Jewish babies burned in gas-chambers? A third of our people, almost as many as the whole population of Sweden, murdered?

Not all Jews in Europe were exterminated: out of the 9,270,000 who lived in continental Europe in 1939- some 3,000,000 have remained alive (including Jews in the U.S.S.R.). Out of the 3,250,000 Jews in Poland – 150,000; out of 850,000 in Rumania – 300,000; out of 360,000 in Czechoslovakia – 33,000; and so on. Hundreds of thousands of these survivors are still in camps, in that same Germany, surrounded by the murderers of their people, surrounded by the same hatred as under Hitler. In a Gallup Poll recently taken by the American Military authorities in the American Zone of Germany, 60% of the Germans approached approved of the massacre of the Jews by Hitler, 14% condemned the murders, 26% were “neutral”.

The Jews do not want to stay where they are. They want to regain their human dignity, their homeland, they want a reunion with their kin in Palestine after having lost their dearest relatives. To them, the countries of their birth are a graveyard of their people. They do not wish to return there and they cannot. They want to go back to their national home, and they use Dunkirk boats.

Hunting “Illegals”

And here, as the noble Lord said in the House of Lords, “their hope is doomed to end in the most terrible disillusionment”, as on the seas leading to their land they are hunted by the powerful navy of the Mandatory, and forcibly sent back to live in concentration camps again, this time in Cyprus. And we were told by the Under secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. MacNeil, in the House of Commons on May 5, that “vigorous, extensive and varied measures are being taken” against immigration of Jews into Palestine unauthorized by the White Paper authorities, meaning that pressure, economic, military and diplomatic, is being exerted by the British Government on the governments of other countries in Europe and America, to blockade the Jewish victims of the Nazis in Europe, to close all frontiers against them for transit and exit, to keep them forcibly where they are in order to preserve the sanctity of the White Paper. Even the machinery of the United Nations is used for that inhuman purpose.

Viscount Samuel spoke the mind of the entire Jewish people when, referring to so-called illegal immigration in answer to Lord Altrincham in the House of Lords, he said: “When the noble Lord denounces with so much vehemence the horrible conditions in which these immigrants are coming in, and says we must uphold the law, the Government of the United States and other Governments are inclined to ask, ‘How dare you shut out these Jews, and stop this immigration in defiance of the very spirit of the Mandate which you purport to administer?’” He continued, “The government says, ‘We have passed an ordinance that is the law’. The Zionist Organization says, ‘The law you have passed is itself an infringement of the law, an international law, approved by the League of Nations.’”

When the war was over, the war in which a million Jewish soldiers took part on the Allied side, including 30,000 volunteers in Jewish units from our country, when the appalling extent of our disaster became known, we made an application for the first 100,000 refugees to be brought to Palestine. There was an acute shortage of labor here. But it soon became clear that peace came not for Jews, and that Hitler had not been defeated – as far as Jews are concerned. He may have perished at the hand of the allied armies, but his venomous doctrines against the Jews still stand. The peoples of Europe were liberated – but not European Jews. Displaced persons of every nation could go back to their countries, where they found a government of their own people to care for them. But the home of the Jewish displaced person was closed, and strong forces of air, sea and land were mobilized to guard the gates. Then even the might of the British Navy did not suffice, so the whole pressure of Great Britain – economic, political and diplomatic – was brought to bear “vigorously, extensively and variedly” in Europe and the Americas, to keep the Jews where they were.

Even the unanimous recommendation of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry to admit 100,000 refugees at once was turned down. Similarly, the finding of the Anglo-American experts that the country could absorb 100,000 refugees within a year had no effect.

Police State

The White Paper policy proved to be superior to all humanitarian considerations, to all the economic needs of the country, to all obligations and requirements of the Mandate. Such a policy could only be carried out by force, and the Government embarked on a system of oppression which turned Palestine into a police state. All civil liberties known to English law

were not merely limited but for all practical purposes abolished. Orders can be made for the detention of any person for any period or “during the High Commissioner’s pleasure” without any process of trial. Thousands were in fact so detained and many have been kept in detention for years. Even persons convicted by the Courts were detained after having served their sentences.

Unrestricted rights of arrest, search, confiscation of movable and immovable property, detention and deportation have been reinforced by the wide powers given to Military Courts to impose the death sentence for the use and the mere carrying of firearms, explosives, etc. Liability to the same punishment is incurred by every member of a group if such an offence is committed by any other member. Searches of agricultural settlements, whether allegedly for arms or for persons engaged in defense training, or for “illegal” immigrants, have been increasingly numerous from 1943 onwards; settlers attempting passive resistance lost their lives on more than one occasion. On the 29th June, 1946, large army forces occupied 25 settlements and the premises of Jewish national institutions in the towns. Jewish elected leaders were arrested and detained for four and a half months without trial. An unprecedented house-to-house search of Tel-Aviv from July 29 to August, 1946, involved over twenty thousand troops. The imposition of “statutory martial law” in March, 1947, deprived 240,000 Jewish inhabitants of all the ordinary mechanism of social existence for over two weeks.

Apart from these peak phases of military activity, the month-in-month-out regime in Palestine for years now has been one of press censorship, house curfews, road curfews, police and military searches, patrols and identity checks, accompanied by the shooting of curfew-breakers and of persons who fail to answer challenges. Whether so intended or not, this regime has been in fact one of repeated collective punishment of the entire community.

Policy not Individuals, to Blame

I should be the last person to make wholesale accusations; on the contrary, I must record numerous occasions when British soldiers and sailors carried out the painful duties of searches, arrests and expulsion of refugees with disgust and tears in their eyes, and tried as far as was consistent with their position to help the victims of the oppressive regime. There were cases of soldiers and sailors risking their lives to save refugees from drowning, and considering the spirit of the regime and the virtual lawlessness which it has established in this country, it is a matter of surprise that the unofficial assaults were so few. It is not the soldier or the policeman who is to blame – it is the regime, the White Paper policy the breaking of pledges, the violation of the Mandate, in short, what Mr. Churchill called the “squalid war against the Jews.”

Government's Memorandum

At the special assembly of the United Nations last May the British representative, Sir Alexander Cadogan, candidly admitted the failure of the mandatory in Palestine. The Palestine Government has recently published a memorandum on the Administration of Palestine under the Mandate to explain the reasons for that failure. It tries to achieve the impossible – to justify the White Paper of 1939, to show that policy was inherent in the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate from the beginning. There is no need to refute such a contention. Again, instead of telling us what the Administration did to implement the Mandate, the memorandum tells us why the Administration disliked it. In this sense it is a revealing document. For the first time, the Administration has openly confessed its hostility to the Mandate in an official document. For the sake of truth I must say that this self-indictment is rather excessive. The memorandum is supposed to cover not only the period since the White paper of 1939, but the whole period of the Mandate since 1922. It is not correct to say that the whole Administration was hostile to the mandate all the time, as the authors of the memorandum seem to imply. There were people in the Administration who tried to carry out their duties faithfully without any personal bias. I could mention several names, but shall mention only Field Marshal Lord Plumer, High Commissioner in 1926 and 1927, who as far as I know was neither pro-Jewish nor pro-Arab, but only faithful to his duty, and carried out his job honestly and simply as a straightforward soldier without fear or favor. When there was Arab unemployment he tried to find work for Arabs; when there was Jewish unemployment he did the same for Jews. There were people like him before and after. I could even name some among those who are serving in the Administration today, but I am afraid they will be embarrassed if I do so.

But it is true that, on the whole, this memorandum reflects the general attitude of the Administration in Palestine, as well as in some other places in the Middle East and in London, who were biased against the mandate and the National Home from the beginning, and did everything they could to obstruct the Mandate until they succeeded in superseding it by the White Paper of 1939.

A full and detailed analysis of this memorandum will be published in time and presented to the United Nations. Here I shall make only a few observations.

The "Dual Obligation"

First of all, on the so-called dual obligation. While we still maintain that the primary purpose of the Mandate was the establishment of the Jewish National Home, we readily admit that this was not the only obligation which was incumbent on the Mandatory. Even if there were not a single word in the mandate about the non-Jewish population in Palestine it would be the duty of the Government as a Government to promote the well being and advancement of all inhabitants without distinction, Mandate or no Mandate.

If we have any complaints against the Government it is not that they have done too much for the population, but that they have done almost nothing for the National Home and very little for the inhabitants of the country. In our view, it is a fallacy to regard the duty of the Government to the population as a whole as in any way conflicting with its other duty, whether primary or not, to promote the establishment of the National Home. Even this memorandum

does not deny that the Jewish effort “benefitted the Arab as well as the Jewish section of the population”, that the progress of the country as a whole was materially assisted by Jewish development and that the increase in the country’s prosperity which resulted from Jewish enterprise facilitates the financing of measures of general development.

Disparity between Jews and Arabs

But the memorandum makes a great point of the disparity between Jews and Arabs in Palestine. A disparity there is, in mentality and social outlook, in public spirit, in dynamic power, and in many other things. There is also a disparity between people living in the twentieth century and those living in the fifteenth or even in the seventh century. But in stressing the point of disparity the memorandum is rather one-sided; it brings it up as an accusation against Jews and gives it as a reason for curbing their progress. Now, if a disparity between Jews and Arabs is a defect which ought to be remedied by the Administration, then the Government should mention all the disparities between Jews and Arabs and try to remedy them all.

I shall mention only a few. There is the disparity in numbers. There are some 600,000 Jews in Palestine and some 1,100,000 Arabs. There are no reliable figures in this respect. There is an even greater disparity than that. The Arabs own 94% of the land, the Jews only 6%. The Arabs have seven states, the Jews none. The Arabs have vast under-developed territories – Iraq alone is three times as large as England with less than four million people – the Jews have only a tiny beginning of a national home and even that is begrudged them by the Palestine Administration. The most glaring disparity perhaps is that the Arabs have no problem of homelessness and immigration, while with the Jews homelessness is the root cause of all their sufferings for centuries past. Some of these disparities were summed up by the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations in 1939 when they said: “It should be remembered that the collective sufferings of Arabs and Jews are not comparable, since vast spaces in the Near East, formerly the abode of numerous populations and the home of a brilliant civilization, are open to the former, whereas the world is increasingly being closed to settlement by the latter”.

“Hewers of Wood and Drawers of Water”

Perhaps the most amazing statement made in that memorandum is the representation of the Jews as a “privileged group” as against the Arabs, who are shown as hewers of wood and drawers of water. It would be interesting to know what are the special privileges accorded to Jews in Palestine. Is it that, as His Excellency the High Commissioner is reported to have mentioned the other week, the Jews pay 70% of the taxes while the Arabs get approximately 70% of the services?

But the real mischief of the statement lies rather in the second part of the sentence, denying us the privilege of being “hewers of wood and drawers of water”; we consider this as a great, true privilege. It was denied to us in many countries and many generations, when we were forced to live only in the cities, and in the cities confined to a limited number of occupations. We were forcibly divorced from work on the soil, and if there was an ideal, in addition to the love for our country, which animated the tens of thousands of Jewish youth who came to

Palestine, it was the ideal of becoming hewers of wood and drawers of water, of doing all kinds of hard physical work with their own hands, of living by the sweat of their brow.

What distinguished the Jewish community in Palestine from Jewish communities in the Diaspora is precisely that fundamental change in our economic structure, that the great majority of our people here are people who are doing hard manual work in the fields, in the factories, at sea and on the roads. In a Jewish community of some 600,000 there are more than 170,000 organized workers, men and women. That means more than one organized worker for every four persons, including the aged and the babies. It is the pride of the Jewish Labor Movement in Palestine that it raised the dignity of labor in a country where work is despised.

Dignity of Labor

I had my first conflict with a High Commissioner in this country on that very question. They I was not representing the Jewish Agency, but the Jewish Labor Federation, and I come to see Sir John Chancellor, who was High Commissioner from 1928 to 1931, to ask for Jewish workers to be given a share in Government road works. Sir John, who had come from Rhodesia, tried to convince me that the most suitable system for this country would be the one existing in South Africa, that the primitive, hard, unskilled work should be left to the “native”, while the Jews should concentrate on skilled, better paid jobs. He was very much surprised when I told him that this was precisely the status which we would in no circumstances accept in our country. We were not here to form a superior class, leaving the rough and hard work to others. While we are willing to use our brains, we must and want to use our hands and do every kind of work which is necessary for the maintenance of society.

We had the same discussions with some Jewish employers, among them that great benefactor of Jewish colonization in Palestine, the Baron Edmond de Rothschild, who set out to drain swamps and who for that job brought over workers from Egypt. We offered to do the work ourselves, and when he objected on the ground that this kind of work was unhealthy, we said that was an additional reason why we should do it ourselves.

I could not understand this contempt implied in the memorandum for hewers of wood and drawers of water. We believe that there is no more valuable and important work in this country, or in other like it, than drawing water. You have perhaps seen something of this work in the Negev. It is unfortunate that we could not do very much as hewers of wood, because many invaders and conquerors for the last eighteen centuries have ruined the forests of this country. But we delight in being hewers of rocks and stones, which still abound here. Nothing would antagonize us more than an attempt to deprive us of the privilege of being hewers of rocks and drawers of water, as the Government is trying to do. We believe that the homeland cannot be bought nor conquered. It must be created, and created by hard work.

Another complaint made in the memorandum is that the very purpose of the National Home has prevented it “from having a character other than Jewish and... prevented the assimilation of the culture of the Jewish community with that of the Arab population.” We plead guilty. We are Jewish and we are determined to remain so. We refused to assimilate even with

highly civilized European peoples. Jews in Germany, speaking better German than Hitler, were not saved by their assimilation. We shall be as Jewish as an Englishman is English. We do not need any justification. We are developing our own civilization, our Hebrew language. We shall arrange our life and organize our notions and needs, beliefs and ideas. But this will not hinder – on the contrary, it will stimulate – our seeing in the Arab a fellow-man; a neighbor whose fate is bound up with ours and whose advancement is a vital for us as it is for him. Perhaps it may take him a little longer, because of the age-old disparity of standards and other differences, but we shall do everything we can to help him reach the same economic, social and cultural level as ours. We are not the Government of the country, unfortunately, and while we are made responsible we have no power. We can only assist Arab advancement by our example and by our conscious private efforts, and this we are doing. But nothing can be farther from us than any idea of assimilation. We reject the implication that a conscious Jew who cherishes his beliefs and his language cannot cooperate with a conscious Arab who cherishes his beliefs and his language. Even when we differ on political issues, we do not see why we cannot cooperate in daily life. There is cooperation between Jewish and Arab workers, Jewish and Arab peasants, wherever an opportunity presents itself.

Public Security

In paragraph 8 of the memorandum we are told of the “anti-racial feeling which was shown in the riots of 1920, 1921, and 1929, and Jews were murdered for being Jews during the 1936-1939 rebellion. In the countries frequently held out by the Arabs as exemplary in the matter of Arab-Jewish relations, outrages against the Jews as such occurred: In Iraq in 1941; in Egypt and Tripoli in 1945”.

I hold no brief for the Arabs and I shall certainly not condone Arab riots against Jews, but there are two instructive omissions in that statement. One is the failure of the Administration – here is the finding of the Royal Commission of 1937:

“The first of all conditions necessary for the welfare of any country is public security... Today it is evident that the elementary duty of providing public security has not been discharged. If there is one grievance which the Jews have undoubted right to prefer it is the absence of security. Their complaints on this head were dignified and restrained.¹⁵

The second point is that it is not fair to make the whole Arab population of Palestine responsible for these riots. Not all the Arabs took part in them; on the contrary, very large numbers of villagers, especially those near Jewish settlements, rendered valuable assistance to their Jewish neighbors by giving them information about the Arab terrorist gangs. In these riots, especially in those of 1936 to 1939, more Arabs than Jews were murdered by Arab terrorists. All the Arab victims of Arab terrorism were political opponents of the ex-Mufti.

Government's Land Policy

¹⁵ Palestine Royal Commission report, 1937, Chapter VII, para. 54.

In paragraph 11 of the memorandum there is a curious explanation of why the land policy required by the Mandate was not carried out by the government. Two articles in the Mandate are concerned with land. One is Article 6, which requires the Government to encourage, in cooperation with the Jewish Agency, close settlement by Jews on the land, including state lands and waste lands not required for public purposes. The other is Article 11, which charges the Government with the introduction of a land system appropriate to the needs of the country, having regard among other things to the desirability of promoting the close settlement and intensive cultivation of the land.

For the 25 years of the Mandate both articles have been entirely neglected. Now, for the first time, the Memorandum reveals the hidden reason why the land policy of the Government was “retarded”. It is due, according to the Memorandum, to the specific mention of the Jewish Agency in relation to settlement on the land, because such mention makes the Arabs suspicious of Jewish agricultural development, and this suspicion causes the land policy of the Government to be retarded. But is this the true position?

Western Palestine and Transjordan

The Mandate, as you know, applied until recently to both eastern and Western Palestine. Article 25 authorized the Mandatory “to postpone or withhold application of such provisions of this Mandate as he may consider inapplicable to the existing local conditions (in Transjordan).” In accordance with this Article all the provisions referring to the National Home and the Jewish Agency were made inapplicable to Transjordan in 1922. Moreover, Jewish immigration and settlement were entirely excluded from that part of Palestine. But Article 11 remained in force in Transjordan, and one may ask what was done by the Government to advance its land policy in that part of the mandated territory in which that curious excuse of the Jewish Agency did not exist. Why is it that Transjordan was even less, very much less developed than Western Palestine? Why is it that Transjordan is incomparably poorer and completely undeveloped? Why is it that in Transjordan the population has remained stationary for the past 25 years, and even now when it is made an independent kingdom can hardly support itself? Again, we have another neighbor, Iraq, where that convenient scapegoat called the Jewish National Home and the Jewish Agency cannot be produced. For more than 20 years there has been a national Arab Government there and still the country is less developed than Western Palestine – 95% of the population is illiterate, the mortality of children is over 50%, the sanitary conditions are at an appallingly low level and the Iraqi worker lives on a far lower standard than that of the Arab worker in Palestine.

The Memorandum does not conceal the fact that Arab progress in Palestine has been much assisted by Jewish settlement here. But it is careful to explain that both Arab and Jewish progress is due to the Administration. Again one must ask, why are these beneficial results of the Administration not evident in the other part of the mandated territory, in Transjordan? The eastern part has remained almost as it was before the British Mandate; the western part has been entirely revolutionized both in the size of its population and in the state of its development, the only difference being that on one side of the Jordan you have the National Home and the Jews, and on the other side they are absent.

Government's Share in Development

I do not want you to feel that it is our view that the country has not benefitted at all from the Mandatory Administration. They have carried out works of which no administration need be ashamed, for example Haifa Port and many excellent roads. I would especially point out the relief from the heavy agricultural taxes which oppressed the rural population in Turkish times – I would mention the Government health and educational services, although they serve only the Arabs. But all this does not change the fundamental fact that the Mandate for Palestine has not been implemented, its primary purpose has not been carried out and was very often obstructed even before the White Paper.

The Mandatory in Palestine failed not because Jews and Arabs did not cooperate, but because the Mandatory refused to cooperate with the Mandate.

The White Paper, in destroying the Mandate, has removed the moral and legal basis of the present regime in Palestine. It is an arbitrary rule based on force alone. It is contrary to the wishes of the entire population of the country, it causes untold sufferings to our people, it threatens our national existence. It is incompatible with international obligations and good faith.

Palestine's Future

Now the question, the main and fundamental question arises: What should be the future regime of this country? It does not matter so much what name is given to the regime, whether you call it Mandate, International Trusteeship, Palestine State, National State, Arab State or Jewish State. Neither does it matter very much what the formal constitution would be. You have countries with good constitutions on paper and with bad governments in practice, and you have the reverse. Life does not follow paper constitutions.

Two Bi-National Plans

I will give you an example of a name which can cover different purposes: the term or name "Bi-National State". I know at least two projects for a bi-national state in Palestine which are diametrically opposed to each other. One is based on the very denial of Zionism and the National Home, whereas the other is a full-blooded Zionist scheme.

The anti-Zionist bi-national state is the White Paper of Mr. Malcom MacDonald, who claims that his policy envisages neither a Jewish nor an Arab state, but a bi-national one. Although the Jews will form one-third of the population, the state will not be Arab, but will be shared by both peoples, and shared in such a way that the essential interests of each community are safeguarded. It even promises to protect the special position of the Jewish National Home in Palestine. This is a bi-national state which prohibits Jewish immigration, condemns Jews to remain a permanent minority and perpetuates the homelessness of the Jewish people.

And there is another proposal for a bi-national state advanced by an important labor left-wing group in Zionism, the Labor part "Hashomer Hatzair". It is a project to settle from two to three million Jews in Palestine in the Next 25 years. For that period Palestine would be placed

under the administration of a special Development Authority, the special objective of which would be:

(ii) to promote the settlement in Palestine of at least 2 to 3 million Jews during the next 20 or 25 years by developing the economic possibilities of the country;

(ii) to raise the standard of living and education of the Palestinian Arabs to approximately the present Jewish level during the same period;

(iii) to promote and actively encourage Jewish-Arab cooperation as well as to encourage the gradual development of self-governing institutions, local and national, on bi-national lines, until the stage of full independence within the framework of a bi-national constitution is reached.

To achieve this, Palestine should be placed under a Permanent Supervisory Commission of the three Great powers, and this Commission should be responsible for selecting an administration fitted to fulfill the afore-mentioned tasks; a Development Board is to be instituted by that government, in which Jews and Arabs will participate in equal numbers.

When independence had been achieved, after some twenty to twenty-five years, the Permanent Supervisory Commission would continue to execute some powers of general supervision until the United Nations decided that the new constitution was working well and that Palestine was ready for membership of the U.N.

Jews and Arabs would be organized in two national, autonomous communities; when Palestine becomes independent, it would be constituted as a federation of these two communities. The Central Government would consist of four members, two Arabs and two Jews, elected by a State assembly, composed of the two National Councils of the Jewish and Arab Communities, and of the State Council consisting of equal numbers of Jews and Arabs.

You can easily see that, although these plans are both called Bi-National State, they mean in reality two contradictory things.

Immigration – the Crucial Question

The question of the future regime in Palestine is really not so much a question of legal, constitutional arrangements, but a more fundamental question of the desired future structure of the country, the make-up, size and composition of the population and the nature of the development of its resources. The most crucial question is immigration. Here you are faced with two possible lines of action: the anti-Zionist line, which is that the constitution of the country should preserve the *status quo*, freeze the size and the growth of the present population, arrest the development of agriculture and industry, stop immigration and turn the Jews into a statutory minority.

And there is another line – the Zionist line: That the regime of the country should be designed to realize the maximum development of all the potentialities of Palestine; to cultivate as many millions of dunams as possible out of the 18 million which are at present uncultivated; to

irrigate instead of 400,000 dunams as at present, at least 4,000,000; to increase the size of the population to three or four millions and afford full opportunities for the Jewish people to rehabilitate themselves, while raising the standard of the Arabs to the same level, and in this way to create a living example for the whole Middle East, where Jews and Arabs will cooperate and work together as free and equal partners.

I venture to submit that the second line was envisaged and adopted by the statesmen, British, Arab, and Jewish, at the end of the first world war, when a general desire for a new social order and anew international relations stirred humanity. It was felt that the time had come to redress the ancient wrong committed against the Jewish nation and to give it a chance to restore its ancient commonwealth.

Restoration of Jews, Liberation of Arabs

It was part of a larger arrangement which gave the Arabs their national freedom after many centuries of Turkish oppression. It is wrong to regard the problem of Jewish-Arab relations only in the framework of this little country. The statesmen who were responsible for the Balfour Declaration did not envisage merely the restoration of the Jewish nation alone. At the same time they provided for the liberation of the Arab people, and they achieved this on a much larger scale and in a more effective way. The Arabs gained their freedom in an area of 1,250,000 square miles, 125 times as large as the area of Western Palestine, with a population of some 15 to 16 million Arabs – about the number of Jews then living in the world.

This was the real two-fold arrangement made with the Arabs and the Jews – the freedom of the Arab people in their countries – the restoration of Palestine to the Jewish people.

The Feisal-Weizmann Agreement

The representatives of the Arabs saw and acknowledged this two-fold arrangement, as can be seen from the following preamble to the Feisal-Weizmann agreement:

“His Royal Highness the Emir Feisal, representing and acting on behalf of the Arab Kingdom of Hedjaz, and Dr. Chaim Weizmann, representing and acting on behalf of the Zionist Organization, mindful of the racial kinship and ancient bonds existing between the Arabs and the Jewish people, and realizing that the surest means of working out the consummation of their national aspirations is through the closest possible collaboration in the development of the Arab State and Palestine, and being desirous further of confirming the good understanding which exists between them, have agreed upon the following Articles; - “

The Articles follow.

The Mecca newspaper, “Al Quibla”, carried an article, in its 183rd issue (March 23, 1918), written by King Hussein himself, “calling upon the Arab population in Palestine to bear in mind their sacred books and their traditions, and exhorting them to welcome the Jews as brethren and cooperate with them for the common welfare.”

While realizing that the aspirations of the Jews and Arabs would be fully met – those of the Jews in Palestine, those of the Arabs in the Arab countries – the statesman then were not unaware of the existence of Arabs in Palestine, nor were they unmindful of their interests. But these interests were limited to civil and religious rights, and did not comprise political aspirations, which were fully met in the Arab countries.

This was the underlying idea in the agreement between the Emir Feisal and Dr. Weizmann. It contemplated an Arab State on one side – and a Jewish Palestine on the other. While it was stipulated that measures should be taken to protect and assist the Arab peasant in Palestine, it was understood that Palestine should be a Jewish State.

All promises made to the Arabs were fulfilled, most of them at once, others after some delay. The Arab political problem has been solved completely, and the Jewish people, no less than anybody else, congratulate the Arabs on achieving their full independence.

Promise to Jews not Fulfilled

The promise given to the Jews has not yet been fulfilled. There is no doubt what the promise meant: not a Hebrew University, not a cultural center, not a community of 600,000, not a minority; British and Arab statesmen at that time knew perfectly well what the promise given to the Jews meant. The original intention of the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate could have been achieved, and the Jewish Commonwealth would have been an accomplished fact before the Second World War – if the Mandatory had implemented its mandatory obligations resolutely and consistently.

I ask you, gentlemen, to imagine for one second that there were two or three million Jews in the Jewish State of Palestine before the outbreak of the last war. Do you believe that the disaster which overtook our people in Europe would have happened? Hitler oppressed and enslaved all the peoples whom he conquered: Dutch, Czech, Yugoslav and others – but there was only one people which he singled out for complete extermination, the Jewish people, because this was the only people without a land of its own, a government of its own, a state of its own able to protect, to intervene, to save and to fight.

And now I put the question to you: who is prepared and able to guarantee that what happened to us in Europe will not happen again? Can human conscience, as we believe that there is a human conscience, free itself of all responsibility for that catastrophe? There is only one safeguard: a Homeland and Statehood! A Homeland, where a Jew can return freely as of right. Statehood, where he can be master of his own destiny. These two things are possible here, and here only. The Jewish people cannot give up, cannot renounce these two fundamental rights, whatever may happen.

Arab and Jewish Interests Complementary

The problem of Jewish-Arab relations is not merely the problem of Jews and Arabs in Palestine. It is the problem of the relations of the Jewish and Arab peoples as a whole. Their national aspirations in that broader sense are not only compatible but complementary.

Nobody can seriously claim that a Jewish Palestine could in any way endanger or harm the independence and unity of the Arab race. The area of Western Palestine is less than 1% of the vast territory occupied by the Arab States in the Near East, excluding Egypt. The number of Arabs in this country is less than 3% of the number of Arabs who have gained their political independence. The Arabs in Palestine, even if they were a minority, would still be part of that large Arab majority in the Middle East. The existence of Arab States to the north, east and south of Palestine is an automatic guarantee, not only of the civil, religious and political rights of the Arabs in Palestine, but also of their national aspirations.

But a Jewish Palestine, a populous, highly-developed Jewish State, has something of great value and importance to offer, not only to the Arabs in Palestine, but to those in the neighboring countries as well. Even the small beginnings of the Jewish State, where Jews have occupied and developed only a small fraction of the country, have already had a marked effect on the advancement of the population in Palestine is superior to that of the Arab peasant and farmer in Arab States. Our national aim cannot be achieved without great constructive work, agricultural, industrial, material and cultural, and this must, by its nature, raise the economic and social standards of all the inhabitants of the country. We cannot fully utilize the water resources of Palestine, which are now being wasted, without providing larger irrigation possibilities for the Arab fellah as well. We cannot introduce modern methods of cultivation without the Arabs learning from that example. We cannot organize Jewish labor and improve conditions of work without similarly organizing the Arab worker and improving his conditions.

As long as the government is in foreign hands, the impact of our development on Arab advancement is small. The theory of holding the balance between Jews and Arabs, which in practice meant curbing and obstructing our work, was not only injurious to us but to the Arabs as well.

Jewish Minority in Arab State

One may rightly ask: Why is it that a million Arabs can be safely left in a Jewish State, and why should not a million Jews be left in an Arab State? If the Jews and the Arabs who are in Palestine were all the Jews and all the Arabs that exist in the world, this would be a very logical and conclusive argument. There would then be no reason whatsoever why one should prefer an Arab to a Jew or a Jew to an Arab, and only numbers would count. But one cannot ignore the fact that both communities living in Palestine are merely fragments of larger communities living outside – that both of them belong to these larger units and that their fates are inextricably bound up with the larger units. By depriving the Jews in Palestine of a national home, by preventing them from becoming a majority and attaining statehood, you are depriving not only the 600,000 Jews who are here, but also the millions of Jews who are still left in the world, of independence and statehood. In no other place can they have the desire to attain, nor the prospect of attaining, nationhood.

In depriving the million Arabs of the same prospect, you do not affect the status of the Arab race at all. An Arab minority in a Jewish State would mean that a certain number of individual Arabs would not enjoy the privilege of Arab statehood, but would in no way diminish the independence and position of the free Arab race. The Arab minority in Palestine, being

surrounded by Arab States, would remain safe in national association with its race. But a Jewish minority in an Arab State, even with the most ideal paper guarantee, would mean the final extinction of Jewish hope, not in Palestine alone, but for the entire Jewish people, for national equality and independence, with all the disastrous consequences so familiar in Jewish history.

The conscience of humanity ought to weigh this: Where is the balance of justice, where is the greater need, where is the greater peril, where is the lesser evil and where is the lesser injustice?

The fate of the Jewish minority in Palestine would not differ from the fate of the Jewish minority in any other country, except that here it might be much worse.

Against Continuation of mandate

We are against the continuation of a mandate, whether a British mandate or a United Nations mandate. Twenty-seven years ago Britain undertook, and I believe sincerely undertook, the task of settling large numbers of Jews in Palestine, sufficient to build a Jewish State. She failed in her task. I was a difficult task; it required great efforts, it met with not light obstacles, and the Mandatory refused to make these efforts and to surmount all these obstacles. It was not a vital need for the Mandatory. We, too, encountered difficulties, even greater difficulties than the Mandatory. We met not only with Arab opposition, we met difficulties inherent in the nature of the country, we were handicapped by lack of experience and lack of means. We had to collect pennies from the poor Jewish masses in all countries, for rich Jews, with few exceptions, were indifferent to our work and refused to assist us. We persevered. We could not retreat because we stood with our backs to the wall; we had no choice; it was a matter of life or death for us. Would a mother be deterred by obstacles from saving the life of her child?

That is why we succeeded and the Mandatory failed; not because we excelled in ability, knowledge or experience – on the contrary – but because it was a vital, dire necessity for us; we simply had to do it!

What a single Mandatory cannot do, a joint trusteeship would be able to do far less. Intensive development and large-scale immigration require a dynamic administration, constant initiative, quick decisions and continuous action. An administration taking directives from different governments could hardly perform a task of this nature.

Nor can you settle the problem by setting up a bi-national state. A bi-national state, if it has any meaning at all, can only mean parity, either parity of population or parity of government. Parity of population is biologically and politically impossible; nobody can devise means to equalize the numbers of Jews and Arabs and keep that parity constant. Parity in government means permanent deadlock. For those who are satisfied with maintaining the status quo and freezing the development of the country, such a government may be satisfactory. But if development and immigration are the objects, a regime of that nature is utterly unsuitable.

Jewish State – the Only Solution

Only by establishing Palestine as a Jewish State can the true objectives be accomplished. Immigration and statehood for the Jews, economic development and social progress for the Arabs. With the liberation of the Middle Eastern countries from the decadent Ottoman Empire, the Arab race achieved its political aspirations. It is still very far from economic, cultural and social liberation. Formal political independence is not enough, and the more farsighted people among the Arab leaders realize this very well. Unless the Arab peoples advance socially, economically and culturally, their independence is an empty shell.

When the Arab race was liberated, the Jewish people too was promised national restoration. The Jewish political aspirations have not yet been attained, but a great deal has been achieved in the economic, social and cultural fields. The historic interests and aspirations of the Jews and Arabs are not mutually exclusive – they are complementary and interconnected. Each one of them has in abundance what the other needs.

Cooperation between Jews and Arabs will prove the truest blessing for both peoples. Such a cooperation can rest only upon – equality. Nothing will further the Jewish-Arab alliance more than the establishment of the Jewish State. The present tension and unrest, once the main problem is finally settled, will give place to a new orientation among these two Semitic peoples.

The United Nations possess the necessary authority to undertake that great act of statesmanship, which would change the face of the entire Middle east and free the energies of the Arab and Jewish peoples for a great constructive effort.

You will achieve your mission successfully when you restore freedom to Palestine, give justice to the Jewish people, and stability, progress and prosperity to the Middle East.

These three objectives can be accomplished by the immediate abolition of the White Paper, the establishment of a Jewish State and the promotion of a Jewish-Arab alliance.

Chairman (Mr. Sandstrom, Sweden): Thank you, Mr. Ben Gurion.

Jewish-Arab Relations

If the Committee is to be able to make recommendations which will contain a remedy for the troubled situation here, I think it is very important that we should determine what is really the root of the evil. Now, in your address, you have put rather much in the foreground your conflict with the Mandatory Power, and we have heard at length your grievances against the Mandatory Power and the Administration of Palestine. You have rather put the conflict between the Jews and the Arabs in the background. There are, however, certain indications that at the root of the evil is this conflict between Jews and Arabs.

The first question I want to put to you is this: Do you agree with me that if you could find a solution of this conflict between Jews and Arabs, the conflict between you and the Mandatory Power would be relegated to second place and perhaps be solved automatically?

Mr. Ben Gurion: I am afraid, sir, I cannot agree with that view, because it implies a few things which we think are not quite the way you have expressed it. There is no conflict with the Arabs on our side. As far as this country and the Arabs are concerned, what we say is that we were dispossessed from our country, although it was a considerable time ago. But we did not give it up. It is our home. We admit that all those who live in this country have the same right to it as we have. We do not say, as in the case of other dispossessed people, that the people who are there ought to be removed.

This view was held by the Labor Party – adopted only two years ago by the British Labor Party, just before the elections – that in order to make more room for Jews that Arabs should be encouraged to move to other countries. We did not accept it even then; we did not approve of it. We do not claim that any Arab ought to be removed. The Arabs deny our right to be in our home. If you call this a conflict, then there is a conflict, but it is not a conflict on our side.

We do not claim anything that they have. The Mandatory here, when these countries were liberated, undertook to facilitate our return. This is the conflict. It is true that, at the beginning, the representative of the Arabs agreed to that settlement. Later they did not keep to their agreement.

So I would not say that there is a conflict between us and the Arabs. If there is a conflict, it is a one-sided one. The Arabs try to deny our right to our country. We do not deny their right to live in this country.

Chairman: Then I must ask if it is not enough to create a conflict that the Arabs deny your right to come here? And as further indication of this conflict, is it not true that the Arabs have not contented themselves with contesting your right academically, that they have shown that contestation of your rights even in acts?

Mr. Ben Gurion: Yes. In this it is the same as in private or in any other public law. This question was adjudicated by the world tribunal when the question arose some twenty-seven years ago. You have the same question in many countries where Jews as private persons – not as a people – were dispossessed by the Nazis. In the meantime, their goods were given away to others, but the law said – at least in many countries, in Greece, I believe, in Czechoslovakia, and some other countries – that the goods taken away forcibly from the Jews were to be returned. Sometimes the people who had these goods refused to return them. But there is a law which is superior, and this law should be carried out. The Mandatory undertook to carry it out and failed.

Chairman: I only want now to explain why I said that there are indications that there is a conflict between yourselves and the Arabs. In the case that you make against the Government, you have referred to a pro-Arab attitude on the part of the Government. That presupposes opposition between Jews and Arabs. I further see, in the case you stated before the Anglo-American Committee, that you end your case by saying, among other things: “The issue is not merely one between Jews and Arabs. It concerns the whole world”*

* “The Jewish Case,” Jerusalem, 1947, p. 303.

Mr. Ben Gurion: Yes, sir. By the way, I did not say that the Mandatory was pro-Arab. I doubt that very much. I said they were against the Mandate, but I did not say that they were pro-Arab.

Chairman: I suppose that your conception of the essence of the conflict has an influence on proposals for settlement. Now, it is not altogether clear how you imagine the development of things here. We have seen that you oppose the White Paper, the land regulations. I suppose you want them abolished – the restrictions on immigration and the land regulations. You want them abolished and, I suppose, immediately.

Mr. Ben Gurion: Yes, sir.

Chairman: On the other hand we see that you want the abolition of the Mandate and that you do not want the substitution of a trusteeship, or something of that kind for the Mandate. Then the question must come up: How do you think that immigration could be implemented if the Mandate has ceased? What kind of government do you think should be established in this country instead of the Mandate?

Mr. Ben Gurion: Well, that is a very legitimate question, and a very sensible question, and I will try to answer you to the best of my ability. We say that the White Paper policy is illegal, and therefore it should be abolished at once. The Mandate, in fact, does not exist, because it was violated by the mandatory. We are not in favor of renewing it. We do not believe that in the future it will be carried out any better than in the past. Therefore we say that the original intention and the need, and what in our conviction is just, should be decided upon by the United Nations, and that a Jewish State should be established.

There are two parts to the establishment of a state. One is the material part, which is the more essential one; the other is the legal part, the purely formal one, which is also of great importance.

I will say a word about the material establishment, because the whole difficulty of the problem here is that you have a people, and you have a country; and the people's right to the country has been acknowledged, but the Jews do not happen to be there yet. They were dispossessed, and they have to come back. So the first thing is the material establishment of the estate, which means that plans based on our experience and achievements, examined and approved by experts – economic, irrigation, agricultural, industrial experts, and so on- should be examined by the Committee and the United Nations to see how they can be carried out; and that a million Jews should be resettled in their country in the near future.

In our view it is not only possible, but it is possible to do so by good will and in a very short time. This is the material establishment of the Jewish State. It may take some time, but in the meantime it will be supervised by the highest authority of the United Nations. The fact that the Mandatory itself referred the question to the United Nations implies a certain recognition that

this is the place where it has to be judged and decided, although the Mandatory did not formally undertake to carry the recommendations out.

Assuming that on the recommendations of your Committee that United Nations approves of the material establishment of the Jewish State, that means the settlement of the first million Jews - I say a million, but it may be 900,000, or it may be 1,100,000 – in the shortest possible time. Even that may and must take some time, I am unable to say how long. I think no one is able to say that, because there are always unforeseen things in human affairs which may happen. But it should not take longer – as far as we can judge now, it must not take longer- than a few years. In the meantime, a committee, or any instrument which the United Nations will decide on, will supervise.

This plan means two things: bringing in a large number of Jews, and developing the Arab parts of the country. The basis of our plan is, first of all, irrigation. You cannot irrigate only the Jewish part of the land. You must irrigate all of it, which means that we must give irrigation to the Arabs. And we must give roads to the Arabs. We must give better buildings and better schools. We must raise the standard of living of the Arabs to the same level, as far as possible, as that of the Jews.

These are the two essential features of our plan of development: a large Jewish settlement, and a considerable raising of Arab standards.

When this plan is approved by you and by the United Nations, then the Jewish Agency can be charged with carrying it out, not only because it is responsible but because it is able to do it. We will be able to do it. It is our responsibility. If the Arabs are willing to take part, we will welcome them. It will be under the highest supervision of the United Nations.

When a considerable part of this large-scale plan of immigration and settlement, and improvement of conditions among the Arabs has been carried out, then the United Nations will decide that there is no more need for supervision, and the independent state of Palestine can be established.

Foundations of Jewish State

We can envisage a state in Palestine only on absolutely democratic lines, where every citizen in the country is equal.

I should like to explain what we mean by a Jewish State. We mean simply a state where the majority of the people are Jews, not simply a state where a Jew has, in any way, any greater privileges than anyone else. I want to mention on this occasion that during our last talks with the Government in London, when certain proposals were made for a settlement-which, unfortunately, we could not consider – we were offered greater rights for the Jews than for the others. Certain examples were given us of British colonies – Ceylon and other places. And we declared emphatically to the Government that we would not accept, that we would fight any privilege accorded to a Jew because he is a Jew. What we want to have is more Jews in Palestine, not more privileges for the Jews. A Jewish state means a state based on absolute equality of all its citizens and on democracy.

When the United Nations see that the main purpose for which this country is destined, to solve the Jewish problem, has been fulfilled and that the time is ripe for us to undertake the administration of the Government itself – then the second phase, the legal, the formal establishment of the state, will be reached. Whether it will take two years or three years, I cannot say, but in that transition period the country will be in charge of the United Nations. That is all we envisage here.

Administration in Interim Period

Chairman: If I sum up correctly what you have said, you mean that it would be an administration of the country under supervision by the United Nations?

Mr. Ben Gurion: Yes.

Chairman: But is that not a continuation of the Mandate in another form?

Mr. Ben Gurion: No, it is not. Because the Mandate means, and you will see the first Article of the Mandate says, that “the Mandatory shall have full powers of legislation and of administration, save as they may be limited by the terms of this Mandate.” This had to be done because at the beginning there was only a very small Jewish community of some 60,000, and they could not foresee how long it would take to reach the consummation of the purpose of the Mandate. We are now in a different phase. There is only a very short interval between the decision to have a Jewish state and the material and legal consummation of a state.

Chairman: Of course, when I asked whether it is not a continuation of the Mandate, that was a contradiction, as there will be no Mandatory. It will be direct administration by the United Nations. But do you think there is an advantage in such a situation?

Mr. Ben Gurion: There is, because, first of all, there will be a clear-cut, unequivocal decision that Palestine is to be a Jewish state. The fact – and this has been admitted by many – that this was not quite clear in the Mandate has led to contradictions. The first thing is that there will be a clear-cut decision. Then the interval will be very short. Therefore, although you can ask what is the difference if you call it a Mandate or if you call it supervision – the difference is that it is for a very short time, you know exactly where you are going, and you know what is going to happen in a few years.

Chairman: May I ask who will then take care of the administration? If it is under the United Nations, they would have to set up a special administration, just as the Mandatory has done hitherto.

Mr. Ben Gurion: No, not exactly, there will be, for a certain time, the kind of government that is called a diarchy, as in India. There will be the plan of development which will be carried out by the Jewish Agency. They will not undertake the whole Government of the country, for many reasons into which there is no need to enter. But the development of the country, irrigation, building, bringing in immigrants, settling immigrants, providing for immigration, this will be undertaken by the Jewish Agency. All the rest, safety, security, external

relations, and all other functions of the Government which have nothing to do with development, will for a time – and we believe a very short time – be under the supervision of the United Nations.

Chairman: In other words, it will be an administration on the lines, more or less, of the one which exists here now, with the difference that the Jewish Agency would assume certain important functions in the administration?

Mr. Ben Gurion: Yes, but this difference is very important.

Mr. Lisicky (Czechoslovakia): May I ask if, in this transitory period, the administration of the country as concerns security, the administration of the law, and so for the, will be performed by the Mandatory Power, by the United Nations, or by any special body? This point is not quite clear to me from your statement.

Mr. Ben Gurion: Well, I think this is a matter for the United Nations to decide. I do not think that the present administration can be left, because you cannot have an administration charged with doing a thing which they heartily dislike. But whether they should remain whether there should be an international administration or a single administration, this should be left to the United Nations to decide.

Mr. Lisicky (Czechoslovakia): That means that you, sir, have no idea of your own about this aspect of the question.

Mr. Ben Gurion: We have not discussed it, and I cannot speak on behalf of the movement which I represent.

Factor of Force

Sir Abdur Rhman (India): Do I understand correctly that you want a Jewish state to be established, to be forced on the country by the arms of the United Nations?

Chairman: I was just going to put a similar question. I understand this one hundred percent Jewish solution of the Palestine question would mean a complete dismissal of the Arab claim to the country. I suppose you agree with me that it is so.

Mr. Ben Gurion: First of all, I think, I ought to answer the question Sir Abdur Rahman.

Chairman: I will come to that, but at a later stage. What do you think will be the Arab reaction to such a solution?

Mr. Ben Gurion: Well, you asked me a question which I am afraid I cannot answer. I am sorry that you have no Arab representatives here, because this question can be authoritatively answered only by them. I cannot say. I would not presume to tell you what may or may not be the Arab reactions, because, as far as I know, there may be different reactions on the part of different people, and I know there are different attitudes.

Chairman: Now I come to the question of Sir Abdur Rahman.

Sir Abdur Rahman (India): In connection with the question of the Chairman, would it not mean a war between you and the Arabs? Let us put it straight. Would it not mean an absolutely bloody war between you and the Arabs?

Mr. Ben Gurion: I will answer the question as it was put to me first and as it is put to me now.

Sir Abdur Rahman (India): They are two different questions.

Mr. Ben Gurion: I want to answer both questions. The first question is whether we want the United Nations to force a Jewish state or Jewish immigration upon the Arabs. This was the question.

The implication is that no armed forces are used against anybody at present. First of all, I want to say that the fact implied is not quite correct. The present position is that armed forces are being used against us. Armed forces are being used against Jews coming into the country. But for the armed forces of the British Navy, the Jews who are still suffering in camps would be here. It is only the armed forces that have prevented them from coming.

Before I answer the question, I will ask this one: Are you in favor of using the forces of the United Nations or of a Mandatory to prevent Jews, by force, from coming back to their country, a thing which is happening now?

Chairman: Well, we will not answer that question.

Mr. Ben Gurion: I am not asking you to answer. I said that the facts are that at present force is being used against us for two purposes: to prevent us from coming here – because, without force, I want Sir Abdur Rahman to know that these Jews would not have been prevented from coming back; and to enforce the racial discrimination against Jews.

Sir Abdur Rahman (India): That is not the answer to the question. It is going absolutely beyond it. If you would only concentrate on the answer to the question put to you, it would be better, because when you say force is being used, the same force is being used against the Arabs, and the same force is being used against anybody who contravenes the law. If I contravene the law, the same force would be used against me today.

Mr. Ben Gurion: I did not finish my answer. I say that the fact is, first, that force is being used against people exercising their rights. Our right is to come back. To prevent this, force is being used.

If the United Nations give a decision in justice and equity that the Jews have a right to come back to their country, then I believe it will be their duty, if necessary, to enforce it. I do not know how much force will be necessary, but you have the same problem everywhere in the

world. The main question is not whether to use force or not; the main question is whether a thing is right or wrong. This is what the United Nations have to decide: Is it right or is it wrong? If it is wrong, then it is for the United Nations to stop ever Jew from coming into the country, and perhaps, as some people here want, to send away those who are here. Such things have happened to us. So this is the question: if the United Nations say this is right, then they will do everything to enforce that right, just as they are concerned to enforce right everywhere else in the world. It is not a special question applied to us.

Chairman: The object of this transitory period of administration, in order to get in the immigrants and to enforce that policy, implies, I suppose, the object of arriving at a state where you would afterwards use democratic means to govern the country?

Mr. Ben Gurion: Yes. When the country has reached a stage when the main object for which this country has to serve can be fulfilled, then you do not need foreign intervention any more.

Chairman: The object is to create the conditions for a democratic rule of the country?

Mr. Ben Gurion: Yes, sir.

The Arab Case

Chairman: Now, let us return to the Arab claim. You know the Arab claim and the basis for it well?

Mr. Ben Gurion: Yes.

Chairman: It can be expressed very shortly. It is a claim based on the possession of the land for a considerable period of time, and the right to self-government of the people in the land. What is your answer to this claim?

Mr. Ben Gurion: My answer to that claim is the answer which was given not only by us but by human conscience in almost the whole world. The same claim was made almost twenty-five years ago. The reply was that you cannot judge this country, which has a special history and special conditions which cannot be found anywhere else, and that the relations of the Jews to this country cannot be judged, by a rule applied to other countries not having the same unique conditions. Really, it is a unique case. You have first of all the people who were here a very long time ago; you know that. I understand the Arab case and I fully appreciate it. It is very simple. They state they do not care what happened, and nobody ought to care what happened fifteen hundred or two thousand years ago. They, the Arabs, are here. They are not here from yesterday; they have been here for centuries. They are the majority, and they have a right to self-determination. They will decide, just as the people in the United States or the people in Canada decided, whether to allow or not to allow immigrants. The fact that Jews were here some two thousand years ago is the same as saying the Roman legions were in England some two thousand years ago, or the Arabs were in Spain fourteen or so many centuries ago. That is their claim. It is simple.

This claim was denied not by one but by many nations in the world because they were faced with a unique case, which is not as simple as that. You cannot compare it with Spain and the Arabs. Can you find a single Arab in the world who wants to go back to Spain? Can you find a single Arab in the world who will spend a penny for Spain? Can you find a single Arab in the world who dreams of Spain? What has he do with Spain? He has his own country. Many kinds of people come from many countries, but here you have a case with out any parallel in history. Here is a people that has for many centuries been dreaming of this country. The Jews might have found a country somewhere else, but no – they never gave up their claim. It is unique, as the case of Palestine is unique.

We were not alone in our view. The entire civilized world said that while the Arabs had been liberated in various territories there was room fro the Jews in Palestine – that the Jews were connected with this country, that their connection was recognized, that they are coming back, that they have a right to come back. They put only one limitation. We, ourselves, would have put this limitation if it had not been put by others: not to displace the population living here. I do not know if I have to go into that again. That was the decision.

What happened? Nothing happened. Was it proved that the Jews do not need a home? Was it proved that Jews cannot build? Was it proved that we can come in only by displacing Arabs? Everything that has happened since that universal decision has strengthened it. The need of the Jews, their ability to come back, and their not displacing Arabs (I don not want to bring in the point that we are benefitting anyone –we are, but not for this reason do we come here) – these three things have been proved even more than they were known twenty-five years ago.

Now I return to the question: what reason has world conscience to reverse that decision? There is only one reason – that the people here say, “No, we will not let those Jews come back.” The same thing has happened in many countries. In certain countries the Government did that, and I do not want to mention the names of those countries. There are Jews who were dispossessed by Hitler. I do not speak of Germany, but of countries that suffer from Hitler. When the Jews were dispossessed, very few, because the majority were murdered, came back and claimed their possessions. They did not get them back for the simple reason that the people in these countries had taken them and did not want to give them back. That was the only reason. But this case is not the same. Then the Jews had three or four rooms and, in the meantime, somebody else had occupied all of them. Here we have a case where there is a large building with three rooms occupied, and eight rooms not occupied, and we say, “Stay in our three rooms, while we occupy the other eight.” They say, “No, we don’t want that. Keep out.” The world has said “No,” and we say there is no reason why you should reverse that decision, because the justice and the necessity are the same, if not stronger. There is no reason whatsoever, except that those who undertook to do it failed.

Chairman: You think the fact that a claim to a country has not been given up is so essential?

Mr. Ben Gurion: Our claim?

Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Ben Gurion: It is, very. Of course, if we are invaders, then we have no right.

Chairman: And you do not think that a thousand years' possession is enough to oust the claim?

Mr. Ben Gurion: Sir, I do not lay down general rules. I say that on this occasion, in this historical and geographical position, it is not for the reasons which I gave in my address. It is not a question of the Arab race; they are fully liberated. It is not a question of the Arab individuals here; they are not suffering. Our claim stands; we did not give it up.

Interpretation of Balfour Declaration and Mandate

Chairman: Let us go now to this decision that you spoke of. I suppose you mean the Mandate?

Mr. Ben Gurion: The Balfour Declaration and the Mandate.

Chairman: Let us return to that act. You mean that is an absolute promise to give the country to the Jews as a state?

Mr. Ben Gurion: Sir, in human affairs you cannot speak about "absolute." I would not commit myself to the word "absolute," because it is a term whose meaning nobody and understands. But it was a definite undertaking, a definite promise based on the recognition of the unique facts to which I have referred.

Chairman: The reason why I use the word "absolute" there, is to come to my further questions, which aim at seeing whether you admit any reservations in the undertaking. The Mandate is based on the Balfour Declaration, and in the Balfour Declaration the word "State" is not used; the term "National Home" is used. Further, it is said "in Palestine," and it has been so stressed. The phrase used is "in Palestine." You do not think there is any reservation in these terms?

Mr. Ben Gurion: Yes, sir, there are two reservations: one is the reservation that the civil and religious rights of non-Jewish communities should not be prejudiced. There is another reservation that the equality and political status of Jews in other countries should not be prejudiced. These are the two reservations. Of course, they are clearly defined. Well, I can leave out for the moment the latter reservation, because you have no trouble with the Jews. What you have in mind is the first reservation concerning the Arabs. This very reservation is a clear indication as to what they meant by a Nation Home for the Jewish People. If, as this memorandum or the White Paper claim, it was meant or even contemplated that the Jews remain a minority, I ask you why you must have safeguards for the rights of a majority. It is nonsense. The whole question, after all, state or no state, is the question of whether the Jews must remain a minority or be permitted to become a majority. This is the question, because a state follows from that. If a Jewish minority was meant, why do you need safeguards against prejudicing the rights

of the non-Jewish communities? In that case you would need safeguards against prejudicing the rights of the Jewish community. If it was meant that the Jews should be a minority, then you would have to have a National Home of a minority, and then to safeguard its rights as against the majority. But you do not need to safeguard the rights of a majority. Therefore the safeguard itself is a clear indication as to what was meant.

However, we are not neutral, and I do not claim to be neutral on that question. But you have a clear explanation why the word “state” was not used then. It was not used for the simple reason that it did not depend on the British Government to have a state. It was not for the British to take the Jews from Russia, Poland, or from the United States of America and compel them to go to Palestine. They could not say they would do it, and therefore they used this term. They did not say “A Jewish Home.” They said “A National Home for the Jewish People.” First of all they did not say merely “a home.” A “National Home” in English has a definite meaning. In English you say, “What is your nationality,” meaning “To what state do you belong?” The English word “nationality” means “state” in Continental Europe. They said “A National Home.” But they did not say only that; they said “A National Home for the Jewish People.” Every word was weighed. It was not simply that somebody got up and wrote a declaration. For months they discussed every word of it.

It is true that they did not say “Palestine as a National Home”; they said “in Palestine.” But “in Palestine” does not necessarily mean in part of Palestine, because if they had meant in part of Palestine they would have said so. They adopted the wording of the Zionist Program. There was a Zionist Program formulated in 1897 at Basle, Switzerland, where our first World Congress was held. The Balfour Declaration adopted the same wording, and it did not adopt the same wording by chance. The reason why they did not use that term “Palestine as,” I think, was that it could be easily interpreted as meaning removing the Arabs from Palestine, which they did not want to do; neither do we want to do it. But “in Palestine” does not mean in a part of Palestine. If you speak about introducing socialism in England, it does not mean socialism in a part of England.

Nor could it have meant a minority. We have the very simple and clear evidence of the Prime Minister. He said that to attribute to that Declaration an intention or a meaning of a possibility that the Jews would remain a minority would have been a fraud on the people to whom the promise was given.

So the reservation which was made actually strengthens our understanding, which is not only ours, but which was the understanding of the Royal Commission, and of every responsible statesman, that a Jewish minority was not meant.

Chairman: When I referred to that term “National Home in Palestine,” I had in mind a passage in the statement of British policy in Palestine published by Mr. Churchill, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, in June 1922.* I quote here from the Government’s memorandum where it is stated as follows: “When it is asked what is meant by the development of the Jewish National Home in Palestine, it may be answered that it is not the imposition of a Jewish nationality upon the inhabitants of Palestine as a whole, but the further development of the

* Cmd. 1700.

existing Jewish community, with the assistance of Jews in other parts of the world, in order that it may become a center in which the Jewish people as a whole may take, on the grounds of religion and race, an interest and a pride – “

Mr. Ben Gurion: Yes, yes, but you are quoting from the memorandum.

Chairman: Yes, I am.

Mr. Ben Gurion: Here, sir, is the White Paper in its entirety.

Chairman: I have it too.

Mr. Ben Gurion: And I read it from the beginning to the end. I did not read only that section. It is very easy to extract a few sentences from a long and complicated document and give it a meaning other than its original intention. First of all, what is of very great importance is that paper, the White Paper, contained several documents. It contains, first of all, and this is perhaps the most important part of the White Paper, letters sent by Mr. Churchill to the Arab Delegation, he would want as far as compatible with the obligations to the two, to put them in a very right frame. The Arab Delegation claimed then what they claim now. There is a majority and the majority wants to rule, and a national government should be set up. He wrote: We cannot do it, because we are responsible for the Declaration made on November 2nd, and a national government in Palestine under the present circumstances would preclude the fulfillment of that undertaking. I quoted that in my address, and I do not want to quote it again because I know they are only telling you little half-truths, even about documents. I gave you the evidence not of a Jewish Inquiry, but of a purely British-Arab Inquiry. They have the evidence of Mr. Churchill himself. While this phrasing was intended, as far as possible, to consider the Arab point of view, its meaning did not preclude the establishment of a Jewish State.

What is the meaning of a Jewish State? As I told you before, it does not mean that all its citizens would have to be Jews. It means merely a state where the Jews are in the Majority, and otherwise all the citizens have the same status. If the State were called by the name “Palestine,” then all would be Palestinian citizens. I think it would be given another name, because Palestine is neither a Jewish nor an Arab name. As far as the Arabs are concerned – and we have the evidence of the Arab historian, Hitti, that there was no such a thing as “Palestine” at all – it is not an Arab name. It is also not a Jewish name. So maybe the name of Palestine will be changed. But whatever the name, every citizen of the country will have equal rights. This is what we mean. We cannot conceive that in a State where we are not in a minority, where we have the main responsibilities as the majority of the country, there should be the slightest discrimination between a Jew and a non-Jew.

Chairman: Well, so far we have treated this term “National Home in Palestine.” We come further to the clause in the Balfour Declaration about maintaining the civil and religious rights of the other sections of the population in Palestine. That expression is in the Mandate, recorded in Article 6, where there is a slight difference in wording. It is said there that “the Administration of Palestine, while ensuring that the rights and position of other sections of the population are not prejudiced, shall facilitate Jewish immigration under suitable conditions..”

Do you think that this clause, while showing that the rights and position of Arab sections of the population are not prejudiced, could be considered as placing an obstacle to Jewish immigration?

Mr. Ben Gurion: Well, on that, sir, there is an authoritative interpretation. Again it can be answered by His Majesty's Government itself. Before this White Paper there was another White Paper. There were many White Papers, such as the Passfield White Paper.* Then two former Chancellors and Lord Hailsham challenged the Government that this White Paper curtailed the rights of Jewish immigration in conflict with the international obligation, and they requested the Government to put it to the test before the Hague Court. But the Government did not see its way clear to go as far as that, and they set up a Cabinet Committee, which discussed the question. As a result they gave an official explanation which is called the MacDonald Letter,** which really should be called Henderson's, because he was the Foreign Secretary. He elaborated on the White Paper and attempted to give an explanation as to what was meant by the references to the rights of other sections – that these were meant not to impair or to worsen the position of the other sections in Palestine, and that so long as the rights and position of other sections were not impaired, it was the duty of the Government not only to allow but to facilitate immigration – this was a positive obligation. Such was the official interpretation made by His Majesty's Government when this question was for the first time raised. I am sorry I have not got it with me, but I will send you that official document.

Chairman: My question is more of an abstract nature. What I am aiming at is the circumstances in which the position of the other Arab sections of the population could be so jeopardized that the clause given protection would operate.

Mr. Ben Gurion: Are you asking me whether this was meant by the Mandate, or apart from the Mandate on the basis of equity?

Chairman: I ask on the basis of the Mandate, where it is stated that the rights and position of other sections of the population should not be prejudiced.

Mr. Ben Gurion: It is my complete conviction and knowledge that what was meant was the economic conditions and position of the population of Palestine, because this article deals with economic matters. Article 6 deals with two economic matters, immigration and colonization. It requires the Mandatory to facilitate immigration and to encourage close settlement of the Jews on the land, while ensuring that the rights and position of other sections of the population are not prejudiced. I want to say that we accept it wholeheartedly, not only because it is there, but because it is right. What is meant by the economic interests of the population is that their economic position should not become worse because of Jewish immigration and settlement. This is what the Mandate meant.

Chairman: But is immigration wholly an economic matter? Does it not also have political implications?

* Cmd. 3692, 1930.

** Official letter from the Prime Minister (Mr. MacDonald) to Dr. Ch. Weizmann, February 13th, 1931.

Mr. Ben Gurion: Certainly. But the political implication was to allow the Jews by immigration to become a nation and have a National Home, and not to remain a minority. That was the political implication.

Chairman: As I said before, the terms of the Balfour Declaration spoke about civil and religious rights. You do not think there is any implication in this change of the wording?

Mr. Ben Gurion: No, Sir. I do not think there is any alteration at all. Here in the Mandate they lay down the terms of the administration of Palestine. When the Balfour Declaration was given it was not even said that Britain would rule the country. The Declaration had nothing to do with the concrete administration. Here in the Mandate they have to lay down a number of set principles for the administration of the country. For instance, in the Declaration there is nothing about the Holy Places. Even the Mandate does not cover the whole problem of the Holy Places, because the Holy Places in Palestine are not merely the concern of the communities in Palestine, but of the world at large. However, in the Declaration there is not a word about it, because it has nothing to do with that point at all. Further, the Mandate said that while you have to encourage Jewish immigration, you have to see to it that the economic position of other sections should not be impaired or become worse. In the Balfour Declaration there is not a word about Jewish immigration at all, although it is implied. There they lay down only the main general principles. Here they give the implications of those principles.

Use of Force

Chairman: I come to another aspect of this absoluteness of the promise of which you spoke. How far do you mean that the Mandatory Power would have to go to enforce the immigration of Jews into Palestine? Was the undertaking to go to war, to go to whatever effort it might mean?

Mr. Ben Gurion: Again I have to take exception to the implication which is contained in your question, that they have to enforce. We did not discuss this question, and what I will say now is because you ask me a question and I am responsible for making it clear. We can be left alone with the Arabs in Palestine. We do not want Britain to impose anything. We only want her not to impose a stoppage of immigration, which she is now doing against the Mandate. The Mandate demanded that they facilitate immigration, but they are employing armed force against immigration. We ask them to take away the armed force and not impose non-immigration.

Mr. Rand (Canada): What about 1922? Would you make the same answer?

Mr. Ben Gurion: The question would not have arisen.

Mr. Rand (Canada): It might have, if the Arabs had opposed immigration and the United Kingdom Government had kept its hands off.

Mr. Ben Gurion: In 1922 the Arabs opposed immigration, and when you read the White Paper of Mr. Churchill you will see that he wrote a reply to the Arab delegation when they declared that they were opposing it, and said: We cannot accept your position.

Mr. Rand (Canada): What I mean is that in 1922 you were a very small proportion of the population. You were not in a position physically to impose immigration on resisting Arabs.

Mr. Ben Gurion: The question never arose.

Mr. Rand (Canada): We are dealing with the interpretation of the Declaration and the Mandate, and you must consider it under all conditions. In that case would you have been satisfied just to allow the United Kingdom Government to keep its hands off the opposition to immigration?

Mr. Ben Gurion: I do not really know why you ask about 1922.

Mr. Rand (Canada): I am trying to find out what the Mandate means.

Mr. Ben Gurion: In 1922 we were a small community in Palestine, and if left alone we could easily have been exterminated.

Mr. Rand (Canada): Therefore you had to have some protection.

Mr. Ben Gurion: We had to have it; the world gave it to us, and it was the privilege of Britain to do it.

Mr. Rand (Canada): So it is not merely a question of withholding the hand against Jewish immigration? It is also a question, in some situations, of shielding immigration.

Mr. Ben Gurion: I was asked by the Chairman how long we would ask Britain to impose, and to that I have answered that we do not ask her to impose any more.

Mr. Rand (Canada): It was not for how long; it was how much. How much force do you think the United Kingdom ought to take? You said that you do not want any force except to remove force against immigration. In 1922 it was different, I suppose.

Mr. Ben Gurion: In 1922 it was different, I agree.

Chairman: You said that you were going to impose immigration?

Mr. Ben Gurion: No; “impose” implies some hostility. When I go back to my home I am not imposing; I am going back to my home – unless you deny that it is my home. If you give judgment that the place in which I live does not belong to me, then I have no right to go there.

Chairman: I refer to your own words. You used the words “we are going to impose.”

Mr. Ben Gurion: I did not say “impose.” I said, we will come back by ourselves – not “impose.”

Sir Abdur Rahman (India): Would you be content if the Government removed the prevention of immigration and left the thing just now to the Arabs and the Jews?

Mr. Ben Gurion: Yes.

Chairman: You know that the Royal Commission said that in their view the association of the policy of the Balfour Declaration with the Mandatory system implied the belief that Arab hostility to the Balfour Declaration would sooner or later be overcome. You are not in agreement with that statement?

Mr. Ben Gurion: I believe it even now; I believe it may be overcome. If there is any certainty in the future, I am certain that if we are allowed to come back to our country, we will live in peace and cooperation with the Arabs. I believe that as I believe in the Jewish State.

Chairman: Let us assume that there would be violent resistance to enforcing the immigration. Would you mean, in any circumstances, to go on the fight the resistance?

Mr. Ben Gurion: I said that we do not ask for a Mandate any more, so the question does not arise on the Mandate. But my answer to the question is that you have to decide whether what we ask is right or wrong. If it is right, and force is necessary, you have to apply it. If it is wrong, not only do you not have to apply force, but you should not allow it. It is a question of right and wrong, and not whether to apply or not to apply force, as in any other conflict. That is the reason the United Nations was established.

Mr. Rand: I suppose that is one case in which you can resort to absolutes.

Mr. Ben Gurion: No absolutes. This was the reason why we were ready in 1937 – I mean the majority were ready – to consider a compromise, although we knew we were entitled to the entire country. When the British Government came and told us of the report of that Commission, they said, you are right, but this will require force, which we do not want and which we cannot do, and therefore we tell you here is a compromise. The majority said that they were willing to consider it.

Mr. Lisky (Czechoslovakia): Does that mean partition?

Mr. Ben Gurion: “To partition,” according to the Oxford dictionary, means to divide a thing into two parts. Palestine is divided into three parts, and only in a small part are the Jews allowed to live. We are against that.

Mr. Garcia Granados (Guatemala): Several times I have heard about the possibility of violence if a decision of the United Nations were not accepted by a certain party. Suppose that decision would give absolute freedom to a Jewish State, would the Jewish people be able to resist violence and defend themselves?

Mr. Ben Gurion: You mean violence on the part of the Arabs? The first thing we will do if such a decision is given will be to make the greatest effort to come to an agreement with the Arabs. First, we will go to them and say: "Here is a decision in our favor. We are right. We want to sit down with you and settle the question, amicably. If your answer is no, we will use force against you." Then we will take care of ourselves.

Chairman: There is one argument in the Arab case to which I want an answer. They say, this decision of the League of Nations is all right, but nobody can dispose of our country without our consent. What do you answer to that?

Mr. Ben Gurion: The answer is that this is our country, and that of the Arabs who are in it. This country is the country of the Jewish people and of all the other inhabitants. This is our answer.

Chairman: I think you have already answered the question. If you can envisage another solution, then this hundred percent Jewish solution that you have...

Mr. Ben Gurion: It is a matter of justice, I am convinced.

Domination

Mr. Simic (Yugoslavia): You said in your evidence before the Peel Commission in 1937 that you would ask for a Jewish State if Palestine were an empty country. But you said that there are other inhabitants in Palestine and that they have a right not to be at the mercy of the Jews. Further, you said that a State might imply domination by the Jewish majority of the minority. Is Palestine more empty now, or does the Jewish State imply less domination of the Arab minority than ten years ago?

Mr. Ben Gurion: I remember that evidence well, but I am afraid you have got only a small extract from it. I will give the gist of the whole of it, and then you will realize more fully what I meant by the extract you have read.

I was asked the same question about a National Home and a Jewish State, and I explained that a National Home is more than a Jewish State. Why? Because a State belongs only to the people who are there, and they can say, we will not allow anybody else in. Suppose there are a million and a half Jews in Palestine and it is a Jewish State; that State can tell the Jews in Rumania or Germany that it does not want them. This might happen.

I was present at an Imperial Labor Conference in London in 1925, convened to discuss the question of immigration in the British Empire. There was a discussion between British Labor and Australian and Canadian Labor. The British asked for a larger immigration – there was a great deal of unemployment in Britain, about two million unemployed, at that time. They asked for immigration of British laborers to Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The delegates from the Dominions were against it. They had their own reasons; it is not my business to say who was right or who was wrong. They all belonged to the same British stock. Such a position might arise in a Jewish State. The Jews in Palestine might say: You are suffering in Germany, that is

your business. Therefore, when they said “a National Home for the Jewish people,” I said it was more than merely a Jewish State for those who are there.

I went on to explain why the Zionist Organization, in its program, did not use the term “Jewish State,” and I gave three reasons. One reason was that it might – though it should not – imply domination, and we did not want the world to have the impression that we wanted to dominate anybody. The other reasons I do not remember, but you have read it. I stand by those reasons; we do not want a Jewish State based on domination. I will send you our program. When we asked for a Jewish State we said that the Jewish State must be based neither on domination nor on being dominated. We stand by the same principle. There is no change.

I may add that tomorrow you will receive a memorandum and all these things you will find fully explained.*

Parity

Mr. Simic (Yugoslavia): Would you agree to have a State with a Jewish minority or majority – with parity in the Government?

Mr. Ben Gurion: In my statement I gave the reason why parity in a Government can be a good expedient when there is a foreign power ruling the country. We were in favor of parity as long as there was a mandatory regime in Palestine. We said it was not right to exclude the population from the Government, although there was a deep, historical reason why there should be a Mandate for a time. But even in a transitory period the population should not be excluded from the Government. They should be there on a parity basis – two equal parts. But you cannot have parity in an independent State.

Mr. Simic (Yugoslavia): Why?

Mr. Ben Gurion: You will have a permanent deadlock. Parity means not that a single Jew and a single Arab have the same right, but that the two communities have the same right. You will have a parity of ten Jews and ten Arabs, and a Government of three Jews and three Arabs. You will have a permanent deadlock. The question of development will come up – the development of the Negev. We are for development for two reasons. We are for development as Jews; we are for development as progressive people. They are not anxious for development. I do not say they are not progressive. They are. But they will be against it. They will prevail, because you need positive decision and positive action. Parity can always prevent any action being taken.

The second question, which for us is just as vital, is the question of immigration. You will have two for, and two against. That is enough to prevent immigration, because you must have a positive decision to have immigration. So you will have a permanent deadlock, which means blocking immigration and blocking development, and I cannot imagine how the Government would exist. There is no such thing in the world.

* See pp.3-69 above, “Political Survey 1946-1947.”

Mr. Lisicky (Czechoslovakia): You are definitely pessimistic about the prospect of Arab-Jewish agreement?

Mr. Ben Gurion: On the contrary; I am definitely optimistic. I am sure that as soon as there is a Jewish State and we are an independent factor, the Arabs will see reason, because they are sensible people and know what is good and what is bad. As long as they believe they can prevent us from being here it is natural that they try to do so. I do not blame them. When the Arabs are against us I do not blame them for some of the means which they use. I can understand their attitude. I blame the Mandatory – not the Arabs. When the Arabs say they prefer a poor country to a rich one I can understand it.

Application of Racial Land Law

Mr. Fabregat (Uruguay): Did you say that the racial land law still exists? Do you consider that this racial land law implies violation of the Mandate and of the Charter of the United Nations?

Mr. Ben Gurion: I think it is definitely against the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Fabregat (Uruguay): By its character of racial discrimination?

Mr. Ben Gurion: Yes.

Mr. Fabregat (Uruguay): I should like to know, in a few words, the process of the practical application of the law in Palestine.

Mr. Ben Gurion: What is the scope of your question?

Mr. Fabregat (Uruguay): You said there were racial laws here. I asked about the application of the racial laws in Palestine.

Mr. Ben Gurion: Here you have a case where certain things can be done only by Jewish-Arab cooperation, because in order to acquire land you must have the consent of the Arab who is the owner, and we acquire land only by Jewish-Arab cooperation. But then the Government comes and says “No.” I will tell you the application of the law.

Take the case of the Negev. There are people there who have large tracts of land. The land is desert. They have neither the means nor the ability to develop the land. So they say they will sell a part of their land to the Jews, and this will enable them to develop the rest of their land. This was mainly the process by which we acquired land in other parts. Then the Government says, “No, you cannot do it.” The result is that the land remains desolate. We cannot come there, and the Arab who would like to develop the land cannot do it because he is prevented by the Government. This is not an imaginary case. There are tens and hundreds of such cases.*

* See also Mr. Shertok’s second statement, p. 494 ff. below

Arab-Jewish Cooperation

Mr. Fabregat (Uruguay): In another part of your exposition you gave a special concept of the relations between Arabs and Jews. Did you speak of cooperation and express the view that the cooperation can only rest upon equality? I consider it would be worth while to know your opinion on this point especially. Do you think that such cooperation might be possible at this moment under the actual conditions?

Mr. Ben Gurion: In another place you will find that I told you that there is cooperation now between Jews and Arabs, just as there is cooperation between British and French, or Czechs and Poles. They represent two distinct things. They are human beings, and they are peoples. I spoke about cooperation in both senses. There is cooperation between Jews and Arabs as individuals. As far as it depends on us, we are willing to cooperate, because we believe it is for the good of both to cooperate. Jewish workers cooperate with Arab workers. The government is not always very happy about it, because it is mostly against the Government.

There was only recently a strike for some fifty thousand employees of the government – Jews and Arabs. There is cooperation between Jewish villages and Arab villages. We would like it to go on, on a larger scale, as far as we are concerned.

You have now mentioned the cooperation between the Jewish people as a people and the Arab people as a people. Such cooperation will be possible only when we have the status which they have – that of an independent nation – not when they are able to boycott our goods, and we are powerless to do anything. But when there is an independent state – instead of a boycott by Arabs of Jewish goods, there will be an exchange of services and goods, because it will be for the benefit of both Jews and Arabs. Therefore, in order to have cooperation between these two peoples you must have equality. Only two equals can cooperate.

Chairman: Are you optimistic about cooperation between Jews and Arabs in a Palestinian State in political matters.

Mr. Ben Gurion: What political matters do you mean?

Chairman: I mean cooperation in governing the state.

Mr. Ben Gurion: The Arabs are just like any other people; privately they have different views, although publicly it may appear that they have only one.

Mr. Fabregat (Uruguay): I am asking about the economic and social cooperation.

Chairman: I added the political matters.

Mr. Ben Gurion: As I say, there are even now sections among the Arabs here, and in neighboring countries, which are ready for political cooperation.

Chairman: On a whole?

Mr. Ben Gurion: On a whole. There are Arabs who are against it.

Chairman: How will it turn out?

Mr. Ben Gurion: If we and the Arabs who want to cooperate are encouraged, those sections here and abroad among the Arabs who want to cooperate would be strengthened.

Chairman: I asked whether you were optimistic about political cooperation.

Mr. Ben Gurion: Yes, definitely.

Conditions in the Camps

Mr. Fabregat (Uruguay): Mr. Ben Gurion, in relation to the immigration problem, you spoke about the fate of the Jews and the children, and the prohibition of their entry into Palestine. May I know, if it is possible, the number of people who are now in the camps in Cyprus, especially the number of Jewish children in the camps in Cyprus?

Mr. Ben Gurion: The total number, I believe, is something more than fifteen thousand – seventeen thousand. There are some two thousand children there.

Mr. Fabregat (Uruguay): I would like to know the number of Jewish people who are now in concentration camps in Europe and the conditions in which those people live at this moment.

Mr. Ben Gurion: As far as I know, there are some two hundred and twenty thousand Jews in the camps.

Mr. Fabregat (Uruguay): What are the living conditions in the camps, the social conditions, the health conditions, the cultural conditions for the young people, for the women, for the men?

Mr. Ben Gurion: We will send in a memorandum giving you details of the conditions,^{*} but I can tell you now that I visited the camps soon after the liberation, and I visited them again recently. There is a very marked deterioration in the conditions, for many reasons, political and economic. There is also a deterioration in the relations between the Jews and the German population there. There have already been cases where Jewish D.P.'s have been murdered by Germans and by German police.

Chairman: The camps are now called Assembly Centers, but I do not suppose that changes the conditions very much.

^{*} See pp. 159-169 above, memorandum on the "The Problem of the Displaced and Insecure Jews of Europe."

Mr. Fabregat (Uruguay): Mr. Ben Gurion, you speak of about one million children killed in Europe under the Nazi persecution?

Mr. Ben Gurion: Yes.

Mr. Fagregat (Uruguay): These children in the camps in Cyprus, do they have parents?

Mr. Ben Gurion: There are many who have not; there are some who have. Many Polish Jews escaped to Soviet Russia, and they were saved, with their children. Most of the large families which you will find in the camps, and some also in Cyprus, with mothers and fathers and children, are those who escaped to Soviet Russia and have now come back. They went back to Poland and from Poland to Germany, in order to get to Palestine.

Mr. Fabregat (Uruguay): Thank you.

Transitional Period

Mr. Blom (Netherlands): I would like to ask first a question about the form of government Mr. Ben Gurion has in mind for the transitional period. Mr. Ben Gurion says that Jews are entitled to build up a country here with a Jewish majority, and therefore they visualize an immigration plan of about one million Jews. Mr. Ben Gurion says that it will take a few years. Then he adds that as soon as a considerable part of that plan is carried out, independence can be established. Now, of course, it is not possible to state exactly how many years it will take before, in the view of Mr. Ben Gurion, that moment has come, that considerable part has been carried out. But perhaps Mr. Ben Gurion can agree that it will take at least something between, say, five and ten years.

Mr. Ben Gurion: Not necessarily.

Mr. Blom (Netherlands): Have you in mind a shorter period?

Mr. Ben Gurion: Not necessarily, sir.

Chairman: How many people do you think you can take in here per year?

Mr. Ben Gurion: I will answer the question, but I do not know whether you will accept the answer. Last year there was a commission of experts, British and American. They discussed the recommendation of the Anglo-American Committee about the 100,000 people. They came to the conclusion – and this was announced by Mr. Morrison, who was Lord President of the Council – that you can absorb 100,000 within one year. This was without any special authority given to the Jewish Agency. If the Jewish Agency is given full authority for development and immigration, then with the assistance of the Jews and with certain damages to which we are entitled – this has already been recognized, and we are getting part of it now, as I imagine Mr. Kaplan told you – much larger numbers can be brought over and settled. You do not need to wait until you have settled the entire million Jews. We worked out a plan for a million for two reasons: it was approximately the number who we know to be in dire need – they cannot stay

where they are; and it was also based on certain calculations of land and industry which we know we can develop. But this is not related to the political problem. You can solve the political problem in half the time that will be required for settling the one million Jews in Palestine. In other words, if you need eight years for settling and absorbing a million Jews, then you may need only three or four years until you can establish a complete or a considerable for of self-government in the country on a purely democratic basis.

Mr. Blom (Netherlands): Well, just to have in mind a certain period, I will think of something between five and ten yeas. Mr. Ben Gurion is more optimistic about it.

Mr. Ben Gurion: I cannot guarantee, sir, nobody can guarantee these things.

Mr. Blom (Netherlands): Anyway, there will be a transitional period.

Mr. Ben Gurion: Yes Sir.

Mr. Blom (Netherlands): I would like to ask what form of government Mr. Ben Gurion visualizes for that period. For instance, who will provide the judiciary services, the police force and so for the?

Mr. Ben Gurion: As far as possible, judicial and police services will be provided by the people of Palestine, but under the supervision of the United Nations.

Mr. Blom (Netherlands): What do you mean by supervision of the United Nations?

Mr. Ben Gurion: They should have the final control until independence is established.

Mr. Rand (Canada): You mean administration, rather than supervision.

Mr. Ben Gurion: Yes, as far as administration will be necessary.

Mr. Blom (Netherlands): As you know, in the United Nations there is nothing in existence at the moment in the nature of an international police force, or anything of that kind. So that will have to be provided by one or more countries.

Mr. Ben Gurion: We have not discussed all these details. I must be frank about it. We do not really think it is for us to decide. We can only state a certain general principle, a certain line. The details of how to carry that out are not for us to decide. The general lines should be laid down, the principle should be adopted that there should be a Jewish state based on equality, and a large plan of development should be adopted. Then the details will be worked out on the basis of these three main lines. I really cannot answer as to our view on these details, because we have not gone as far as that.

Mr. Blom (Netherlands): Mr. Chairman. I do not see these as details. I think it is a very important question, from the point of view of a practical international policy, as to what the situation will be in the future.

Mr. Ben Gurion: Yes, of course it is.

Mr. Blom (Netherlands): So the Jewish Agency has no special plan in view as regards this?

Mr. Ben Gurion : No, sir.

Mr. Blom)Netherlands: I would like to ask Mr. Ben Gurion what is the opinion of the Jewish Agency on the report of the Anglo-American Committee, last year's report?

Mr. Ben Gurion: We will send you the official reply we gave. We said, first of all, that if the two main recommendations were carried out, the abolition of the White Paper and the immediate admission of one hundred thousand Jews, we would be willing to sit down with a committee of the Government to discuss a long-term policy, because we had there two policies: short-term policy – what should be done immediately; and long-term policy. But we will send you a copy of that memorandum.

Mr. Blom (Netherlands): Thank you very much.

Mr. Ben Gurion: May I add that you will also receive a supplementary memorandum? You have been presented with "The Jewish Case" – with all the material submitted to the Anglo-American Committee more than a year ago. Tomorrow you will get a memorandum which supplies all the happenings and developments since then up to now.* You will find there all the things in which you are interested.

Composition of Jewish Agency

Mr. Blom (Netherlands): My next point is this. I remember that the Jewish Agency told the Anglo-American Committee last year that the Agency was not constituted, in its representative bodies, just as it has been laid down in its constitution, because of the war and because several members of the different bodies had died, and no new elections had been held. I would like to know how this is now. Are the representative bodies of the Jewish Agency now in accordance with the constitution? I would especially like to know whether the non-Zionist organizations have an influence now in the executive bodies, and whether they are represented too. Can Mr. Ben Gurion and his colleagues give the views of the non-Zionists organizations too? What is the position today?

Mr. Ben Gurion: In the Mandate, it was laid down that the Zionist Organization is the Jewish Agency. This is according to the Mandate. There, the Jewish Agency is requested to secure the cooperation of all Jews who want to assist in the building up of a national home. Then, in 1929, on our own initiative, we had a conference to which we invited many Jewish organizations which are officially non-Zionists. But the term non-Zionist does not mean that they are not Zionists. They may be Zionists, but their organization is termed non-Zionists. For instance, the Jewish Community in Palestine is a non-Zionist organization, but almost every Jew in that organization is a Zionist. The same is true in other countries. The Board of Deputies in Great Britain is 90 per cent Zionist, but they are organized in their capacity of a Jewish

* See pp. 3-69 above, "Political Survey 1946-1947.

community in Britain, and not as Zionists. We made our constitution. It was not the Mandate which required us to do it; it was an internal Jewish matter that required that the Jewish Agency should be composed half of representatives of Zionist organizations as such, and half of other organizations whether they are Zionist or not.

In the meantime, something happened. There were a number of communities in Europe which should be represented. They do not exist any more. In America, it was arranged on a personal basis. A number of Jews in America – there were no democratic elections – a certain number of Jews, Mr. Marshal and Mr. Warburg for instance, were designated, taking into account that they enjoyed a large popularity among American Jewry. Many of them died. This, unfortunately, ruined the whole structure as it had been laid down in the constitution. Either people, as individuals, died, or entire communities were wiped out. However, the constitution still remained as it was. The Jewish Agency is still composed of Zionists and non-Zionists, although some of the non-Zionists are living in America and do not actually take part in the work which is being done here.

We have now decided that the next Zionist Congress will call together a Council. What Zionists call a Congress, non-Zionists call a Council. We will call together a council of these organizations, since the old constitution cannot be carried out, because the reality behind it does not exist any more. When we call together such a council, the enlarged Agency may be reconstituted. For the time being, we have the old constitution, but the old constitution does not correspond to the reality.

Mr. Blom (Netherlands): Are there any non-Zionists in the executive body here?

Mr. Ben Gurion: There are in America. There was one here in Palestine, but he resigned because of differences of view. There are three in America who are officially members.

Mr. Blom (Netherlands): Will we be in a position to get the view of non-Zionists?

Mr. Ben Gurion: Oh, yes, I am sure you will be. I can tell you this: that before, in connection with the Anglo-American Committee, and also in our work in connection with the United Nations in America, we cooperated with two large American-Jewish bodies, the American Jewish Conference and the American Jewish Committee. The attitude of the American Jewish Committee on this question differs in one respect from ours. They are in favor of a Jewish state in a part of Palestine; they support a Jewish state in an adequate area of Palestine. They do not associate themselves with our full program of Palestine as a Jewish state. I believe they sent you a memorandum, while you were still in America, on behalf of the American Jewish Committee.

Mr. Blom (Netherlands): We got several.

Mr. Ben Gurion: As far as I know, the Jewish Board of Deputies in Britain, which is the democratically elected representation of British Jews, also identifies itself with the attitude of the Jewish Agency.

Was the Mandate Workable?

Mr. Lisicky (Czechoslovakia): My question is in connection with the quotation, mentioned in Mr. Ben Gurion's statement, from the Report of the Palestine Royal Commission. "The Commission found 'that though the Arabs have benefitted by the development of the country owing to Jewish immigration, this has had no conciliatory effect. On the contrary, improvement in the economic situation in Palestine has meant the deterioration of the political situation' ...The Commission did not think that 'the obligations Britain undertook towards the Arabs and the Jews some twenty years ago have lost in moral or legal weight through what has happened since', but 'the trouble is that they have proved irreconcilable.' The mandate was unworkable."

In another connection, if I remember, Mr. Ben Gurion mentioned that Sir Alexander Cadogan, at the last session of the General Assembly, admitted candidly – whether candidly or not candidly is a matter of taste – that the mandate was unworkable. It is a quotation brought forward by Mr. Ben Gurion. It was not refuted in his statement. I should like to know what is his appreciation of the facts mentioned in this quotation.

Mr. Ben Gurion: In that respect we more or less agree with the view expressed by the Permanent Mandates Commission. I would say that there were on that Commission people with very great experience in the matter.

Mr. Lisicky (Czechoslovakia): You mean the Peel Commission?

Mr. Ben Gurion: No, the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations – the international Commission.

Mr. Lisicky (Czechoslovakia): But what I quoted is from the Peel Commission.

Mr. Ben Gurion: Yes. They discussed this view of the Commission, and they said that, whether the obligations in themselves are reconcilable or not, there may be a different view from that of the Commission. In their view, the obligations were reconcilable, but as the Mandatory said that the mandate was unworkable, then it became unworkable, because a mandate must be worked by the mandatory.

Mr. Lisicky (Czechoslovakia): So you agree on this question?

Mr. Ben Gurion: I say that was what they said. The mandate was not workable, and this was the reason why they accepted that other conclusions of the Commission that the solution must be a compromise. The fact is that the mandate has since then not been workable, because the mandatory said it was not workable. We do not admit that the obligations are irreconcilable. We do not see any conflict in the obligations, but eh mandate became unworkable, and one must admit a fact.

Mr. Lisicky (Czechoslovakia): So you admit the fact that the mandate is not workable?

Mr. Ben Gurion: We admit the fact that the mandate became unworkable, not that it had to become unworkable. You must admit a fact.

Mr. Lisicky (Czechoslovakia): I am satisfied with your answer.

Partition

I see that when discussing the conclusions of the Commission, if I understand rightly what you said, there was some hope of accepting the conclusions of the Commission on the condition of some changes, which means if the Negev were included. Are you in a position to tell me what the situation is now.

Mr. Ben Gurion: We stand by the attitude we took last year, that we will be ready to consider the question of a Jewish State in an adequate area of Palestine, and that we are entitled to Palestine as a whole. We would be ready to consider such an offer of a Jewish State in an adequate area of Palestine.

Mr. Lisicky (Czechoslovakia): Am I right in understanding that you are not opposed to the idea of partition?

Mr. Ben Gurion: We are ready to consider it.

Past Immigration

Mr. Lisicky (Czechoslovakia): In your speech you said: “The original intention of the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate could have been achieved, and the Jewish commonwealth would have been an accomplished fact before the Second world War – if the Mandatory had implemented its mandatory obligations resolutely and consistently.”

That is one point. The second is that I see in the statistics of immigration that the number of Jewish immigrants in the years 1927 to 1931 was as follows: in 1927, the number of Jewish immigrants was 1,713; in 1928, 1,178; in 1929, 5,429; in 1930, 4,944, and in 1931, 5,075. Does this mean that the low number of immigrants in these years was the result of the prevention by the Palestine Government of a larger immigration?

Mr. Ben Gurion: I will tell you. You have raised a very relevant question, and a very legitimate question.

There are two main factors concerning Jewish immigration into Palestine: one is the position and the need of Jews to emigrate. Before the First World War some 3,000,000 Jews emigrated from European countries. This was one factor. The second factor is the attraction of this country to a Jew. Palestine as a country, is not in itself a place of immigration, but one of emigration. People left the country. Many Arabs – especially Christian Arabs who had a little higher standard of living – left the country to go to South America and other countries.

How could Jews immigrate into Palestine? We had to create a new economy. In the existing economy scarcely a single Jew was absorbed. There are some hundreds of Arab villages, and you will find not one Jew there. But there are many Jews in agriculture. We had to build a new economy. If we develop a country we make a place for immigrants, so the question of immigration into Palestine is organically tied up with the question of building and development. We have made a claim against the mandatory power that it was almost entirely passive and did not assist in the development. The less they developed and built, the less room there was for immigrants. And we had to do all the development, almost entirely, with little material means to do it.

Here we see that there is no conflict between the two obligations. We do not admit that the obligations to the Jews and the Arabs are irreconcilable, so I will leave out the question. We were not assisted in the building up and development of the country. You must build houses, you must develop land by irrigation, you must build factories. You heard yesterday the story of our economic effort and how much that was assisted.

If, from the beginning, the Government had assisted in the development of the country as we did, the whole history of Palestine would have been changed. Of course, we cannot prove that – you can never prove a supposition. This is our conviction and it is not enmity to the government. We have no enmity. It is not merely guesswork – we know it. We did the work, and we know what can be done. Take the question of the Negev. With our poor means we could not undertake irrigation there. We could not make arrangements to bring water from afar, because we had to have the authority. The land is not ours. The government has the authority, but they never tried. They could easily bring water to the land, and make it suitable for large-scale Jewish settlement. They did not do it. There you see our position.

Mr. Lisicky (Czechoslovakia): So there was no prevention of immigration on the part of the Government, but you state that they did not encourage it?

Mr. Ben Gurion: There was the other thing, too. We made an investigation of the economic requirements of the country every six months, before the White Paper was published. Every six months the Government fixed a schedule quota for immigrants. The quota was based on the examination of the economic needs, mainly, of course, of the Jewish economy. We come to the conclusion that we needed 25,000 workers. We got three thousand. There was a discrepancy.

Mr. Lisicky (Czechoslovakia): There was a restriction on immigration even before the White Paper?

Mr. Ben Gurion: Theoretically there was not, but in fact we did not get the number of people we needed, and therefore many Jews could not come. When in 1939 we asked for the very modest figure of three thousand, we only got three hundred. We had to refuse that. We could not supply the needs of the people that wanted to come.

Mr. Lisicky (Czechoslovakia): But I see that at certain times you had four thousand.

Mr. Ben Gurion: That was general. Before the White Paper there were different categories of immigrants. There were capitalists – people with means. There were relatives, pupils, and there was a labor schedule. The labor schedule was fixed every six months. The figures you have there are the total number of immigrants, but I was referring to the labor schedule. Every six months it was newly estimated and decided upon.

Mr. Lisicky (Czechoslovakia): And now for your conclusions. You are refuting the international trusteeship of the United Nations. You are refuting the bi-national State, and the reason for your refuting of a bi-national State is the submission that parity in the Government would necessarily be a permanent deadlock. That means that you have no confidence in the possibility of cooperation with the Arab part of the Palestine population as far as they are in equal numbers or in the majority. But if I understand you well, you have great confidence about the prospect of this cooperation, once the Jewish part of this population is in the majority. There is another aspect which does not seem to me to be entirely consistent with your pessimistic views about the possibility of cooperation with the Arabs in Palestine. In your conclusion you ask the United Nations for help in accomplishing three objectives: the immediate abolition of the White Paper, the establishment of a Jewish State, and the promotion of a Jewish-Arab alliance. I am asking, would it not be useful to start with the promotion of the Jewish-Arab alliance in the country and not outside, and if you think that there is no prospect of this alliance in the country, would the prospect for this Jewish-Arab alliance outside the country be greater than in the country?

Mr. Ben Gurion: Well, you asked me a very relevant question. I must apologize to the Chairman for having to repeat a part of an answer I gave before. Perhaps you did not hear what I said. You must distinguish between Arabs as individuals and as a political society. A Jew is a worker, and an Arab is a worker. A Jew who has an orange grove and an Arab who has an orange grove will have common interests, and they work together on many occasions. But this does not prevent them from acting not as workers or as orange-grove owners, but as Jews and Arabs, in concerns that involve different and conflicting political problems. Now I come to the question of cooperation with Arabs in Palestine, and cooperation with Arabs outside Palestine. While there are Arabs who from the beginning have been in favor of Jewish immigration, and there are still Arabs who are in favor, not a single Arab will come out publicly for Jewish immigration. I don't blame them. I don't say that the Arab is dishonest; he is under the pressure of his community. There was an example which I am not going to particularize – a group of Arabs who had not taken the orders of the Mufti. As long as the Arab community is able to prevent the growth of the Jews in Palestine, they will do it, because there will always be a group of people who will be strongly against it and they will prevail, especially when they have behind them in addition the policy of the Mandatory Power.

Mr. Lisicky (Czechoslovakia): By what means will they prevail?

Mr. Ben Gurion: Among their own people they will impress their program, because it is easier to raise anti-Jewish feeling and anti-foreign feeling in the country. As long as they can prevent our growth, they will prevent it. However, once it is an established fact, many who now follow one lead may change their view. I will give you a concrete example based on experience. In 1937 proposals were made by the Peel Commission to establish a Jewish State, and also an Arab State. It was accepted by the Government. For the first time in recent history the official leader of the

Arabs, who had all the time been our bitterest opponent, who before the Peel Commission even refused to promise that the 400,000 Jews taken in to Palestine would be accorded their full rights, submitted to us, through intermediaries, proposal for a Jewish-Arab agreement. The proposals came to us in London through an Englishman and a Jew. The Jew was Mr. Hyamson, and the Englishman was Colonel Newcombe, who was a friend of the Arabs. In Palestine they came through Dr. Magnes. We asked them who was behind these proposals. In London and here we were told, the Mufti. This was the first time in recent history that it had happened. We said that while the proposals themselves were not satisfactory, we were willing to meet the Arabs and discuss them.

Mr. Lisicky (Czechoslovakia): But at the time, if I understand well, there was no question of a Jewish State in the whole of Palestine?

Mr. Ben Gurion: Yes, you are right. We said we were willing to meet the Arabs and discuss proposals. Time passed, and as we received no answer we asked where the people were. They said that they had gone back on their proposals, and that they refused to discuss them. What had happened? In the mean time, a new policy had been formulated by His Majesty's Government. They had scrapped the policy of the Peel Commission. They had scrapped the policy of having two states, which meant having a Jewish State. Then the people who had come to us said, "Why should we come to terms with the Jews? There is no need." So we think that as long as they are able to prevent us, they will. Their wish and policy will prevail among the Arab community. Since this is in our view a matter of right and wrong, it should not be decided only by the Arabs, but by a higher tribunal. We say that you are the tribunal.

Mr. Lisicky (Czechoslovakia): Now you are in the absolute. Do you know the definition of politics? Politics is the art of the possible.

Mr. Ben Gurion: The only question is what is the possible. We maintain that once this question is decided, they can no longer prevent either our being here or our being their equals. This means independence. We know these people. We live with them. We also have certain indications from recent history, from the last war, when the question was decided. It was decided by the Allies, by the Associated Powers, as they called themselves, in the League of Nations. The Arab world accepted it then. When did the opposition of the Arabs begin? Not in 1917, 1918, or 1919, when all the Arab representatives, Feisal, the Syrian Committee who came to Versailles, the Sherif of Mecca, all accepted and were in favor of and *wanted* an alliance. Then they began to see that it was not meant seriously – I do not think that Mr. Balfour or Mr. Lloyd George did not mean it seriously, but the people here did not, and the Arab representatives had indications that they did not. I do not want to go into this. It is a sad story. I will only mention 1920. Palestine was under military occupation. There were many troops here. I myself was still a soldier in the British Army. I happened to be in Jerusalem. It was the Jewish Passover. There was a pogrom which lasted for three days in the Old City of Jerusalem. I could not understand why it was. There were sufficient troops. But the Arabs, not being as sophisticated as Europeans, said to themselves "ad-Dasla ma'ana," which means: "The Government is with us." Then they said "If the English are against it, why should we be for it?" I do not think they had reason to doubt the sincerity of the Government in London, but seeing what was going on here, they said "Why should we agree?"

When they know that a decision was made, they accepted it. Therefore I say we have a reason to believe. When you talk about certain things you cannot be absolutely sure, but as far as you can foresee things, given human nature, given a world decision, given a fact given a living interest, when a Jewish State is established, that State will be in as good relations with the Arab States as any other State in the world with its neighbors. We have an example in the Middle East, Turkey and Greece. There was perpetual war between Turkey and Greece, but once a decision was made, and Turks were transferred to Greece, and *vice versa*, they became the best of friends. There is more reason here to become good friends, because there is a kinship between us. We need each other. As I said, we have things that they have not, and they have things which we have not. If we can benefit them and they can benefit us, there is no reason in the world why this should not be done, if the fact that we are here, free and equal, is established. That is as far as human beings can foresee.

There is another factor: we know we will do it with the best intentions in the world. Since we came to Palestine, we have been trying to do that. I can tell you from my personal experience that when I came to Palestine, like other Jewish pioneers, I came to work on the land, forty-one years ago, when Palestine was ruled by the Turks. I had to go to work on the land with a rifle on my shoulder, because there was lawlessness in the country. Arabs were shooting Arabs, and especially shooting, if they could, Jews. We had to defend ourselves. We had a special organization called "The Watchman." It was the policy of that organization to create the best possible relations between us and our Arab neighbors. We succeeded. We taught them to respect us. When they found that the Jews could defend themselves, although they were few, and could use a rifle and take care of themselves as well as or maybe better than they, then we tried to make friends and were successful. The same people who attacked us before became our best friends. We believe this will happen on a larger scale once we are established and independent.

Mr. Lisicky (Czechoslovakia): As a majority?

Mr. Ben Gurion: Of Course, only as a majority. You cannot have a State without a majority. Then there will be an alliance between the Jews and the Arabs. The world can help us with that, if the Arabs know that it is the wish of the world. They are members of the United Nations. There is now a general inter-dependence. Even the greatest powers need each other. It is one world. There can be no absolute independence. We will be a member of the United Nations. They are members of the United Nations. The United Nations can help us to accelerate the process, which will come by itself, of Jewish-Arab friendship.

Mr. Lisicky (Czechoslovakia): I see your point is based on a strong belief. We are in a land of strong faith.

Mr. Ben Gurion: Sir, you would not survive if you did not have that faith.

Supervision in Transitional Period

Mr. Hood (Australia): Mr. Chairman, I would like, if I may, to attempt to secure more of a decision on a point which has already been touched on this morning. In fact, it was touched on most recently by Dr. Blom. Dr. Blom in one question, to which Mr. Ben Gurion replied, spoke of the transitional period – the interim period involved in the proposition which was outlined in general terms by Mr. Ben Gurion. That is to say, the creation of a Jewish State, looking to the early accomplishment of the Jewish majority. In reply to that earlier question, Mr. Ben Gurion stated that in his view the supervisory arrangements connected with that period could be regarded as a detail, and he further indicated that in the planning, which has been carried out by the Agency in this respect no particular consideration had been given to that aspect. I note, however, that in the statement which we heard last week there are in fact real indications of an attitude regarding the provisional arrangements for supervision. You stated, for example: “We are against the continuation of a mandate, whether a British mandate or a United Nations mandate.” Further down we read: “What a single Mandatory cannot do, a joint trusteeship would be able to do far less.” Further, if I may continue to quote: “Intensive development and large-scale immigration require a dynamic administration, constant initiative, quick decisions, and continued action.” That statement touches on every vital aspect of the whole issue. I would like Mr. Ben Gurion, if he could address himself again to that point, to try to indicate to us exactly what sort of supervision he would envisage for the transitional period. It is a crucial point in our consideration of this question. There is nothing at present laid down in the United Nations Charter or any associated document which clearly and specifically foresees that sort of contingency or provides for it in any practical way. There are certain articles of the Charter to which reference could be made, but they are in such general terms that no real help could be obtained from them. To sum up, could Mr. Ben Gurion indicate again what possible proposals for this transitional period he would put forward, if asked to put them forward? I repeat, in a proposition of this nature the onus of proving the feasibility of the whole proposition devolves on those who put it forward, and the feasibility really depends on the nature of the interim arrangement.

Mr. Ben Gurion: It is really the same question, and I understand why the same question occurs. I will try to make myself as clear as possible. I will not enter again into the arguments why we are against the continuation of the Mandate. It failed. That was said ten years ago. We do not think it will change. Then you ask if it is necessary to have a transitional period; what is the difference between what we call non-Mandate and transitional; again there will have to be some Mandatory power here. I might say there would be two very important differences which will change the entire nature of the temporary supervision. One is that there will be a clear assumption that what we claim is right, and is approved by you. If not, if you do not approve it, the question does not arise. The first very important difference would be that there would be in existence a clear-cut decision by the highest tribunal in the world for a Jewish State in Palestine. Then the second point which is of no less importance, is this: the Jewish Agency, representing both the Jews who are in Palestine and those who are to come, would be given authority under these conditions to carry out the plan of development and settlement which involves bringing over, in the shortest possible time, one million Jews.

Then comes the question (and you must envisage the question only under these two conditions, otherwise your question does not arise at all) – when you reach such a decision, and the Jewish Agency is given this authority to proceed with the approved plan of settlement,

immigration and development in the shortest possible time, the question will arise as to what will happen meanwhile. The decision is thee, the Jewish Agency has the authority – but Palestine cannot yet be established as a democratic independent State. We say that for that short time, and under those conditions, there will be a supervision by the United Nations. I know, sir, that there are no provisions in the Charter, because when this Charter was formulated it did not have in mind such a problem. It had in mind the needs of all the peoples in the world, and it did not bother with such a specific problem. However, I do not see that it is beyond the statesmanship of the United Nations to lay down definite conditions, in this special case and for a very short period, providing for such an international supervision as will ensure the execution of these two decisions of the United Nations – to have a State, to have the Jewish Agency carry out that plan - and provide for the administration of the country until it is able to be a democratic independent country, and to guarantee peace and justice for everybody in the country, which will be the problem of the transitional period. The details of how to do it I admit we have not worked out. When it comes to that, we will take part in it. We will make our proposals. However, I do not think there will be any great difficulty. Once you have decided on these two great questions of principle, then there will be no difficulty at all, and you will be able to devise a special regime for a certain period to fulfill that special function under those conditions.

Mr. Abdur Rahman (India): That would be regarded as the paramount interests of the inhabitants of the territories, as mentioned in Article 73 of the Charter?

Mr. Ben Gurion: You are raising another question from the one Mr. Hood raised.

Sir. Abdur Rahman (India): In your reply you referred to the fact that the United Nations were not concerned with special questions but were laying down general principles. I was trying to draw your attention to the words which apply to the present case also, and as to how you would reconcile your statement in the presence of those words.

Mr. Ben Gurion: First of all, this applies to trusteeship. I do not propose trusteeship. Secondly, there is not only Article 73; there is also Article 80, and Article 80 was adopted for this very special case of Palestine. Article 80 speaks also about trusteeship agreements: "...until such agreements have been concluded" – they are not yet concluded, and we do not propose to conclude a trusteeship agreement – "nothing in this Chapter shall be construed in or of itself to alter in any manner the rights whatsoever of any states or any peoples or the terms of existing international instruments to which Members of the United Nations may respectively be parties." This is the special Article of the Charter which applies to Palestine. It was introduced only because of Palestine. What you ask me implies another question – whether or not we have a right. Mr. Hood did not raise that question.

Mr. Hood (Australia): I would like to ask whether or not you would expect that during this transitional period some means of enforcement would have to be provided or to exist – whether police functions would have to be provided for, and whether that provision would have to be made even if never used for the maintenance of law and order.

Mr. Ben Gurion: Yes, of course. I would say, for peace and justice – it does not matter what you call it.

Mr. Hood (Australia): Would that be the same authority within Palestine as would exercise these functions referred to in your statement? That is to say, the functions of dynamic administration, initiative, quick decision, etc. Would it be the same?

Mr. Ben Gurion: No, This would be the carrying out of the development scheme. It would be the Jewish Agency. I believe they will have the dynamic quality.

Mr. Hood (Australia): In that case would the Agency be acting for the whole population of Palestine, or for the Jews only?

Mr. Ben Gurion: I said, if the Arabs would accept it. I cannot speak for them really. If they cooperate in the scheme of development, they will also, with the Jewish Agency, take part in it.

Mr. Hood (Australia): I am trying to clear my mind on this. I should like to put one further question. Do you not see difficulties of a profoundly constitutional nature in having a divorcement, as it were, of the real State power – that is to say the enforcement of law and order – from the specific administration, the day-to-day handling of the policy?

Mr. Ben Gurion: Certain difficulties may arise, but not of an insurmountable nature, given the authority of the United Nations.

Mr. Hood (Australia): A question on a different point. Would it be contemplated that the Jewish State should be eligible for membership in the United Nations from the initial period or after the transitional period?

Mr. Ben Gurion: As soon as it is established. I do not say as soon as there is a decision to have a Jewish State, but a representative of a State which has been established should be admitted. But on that the United Nations must decide. It should be admitted as soon as possible, because I think this in one of the greatest injustices done by the entire world and it ought to be remedied.

Mr. Rand (Canada): I want to clarify in more concrete terms what Mr. Hood was speaking about. As I understand your program for immigration and expansion of capital, it involves the protection of an outside power, whether it is the United Nations directly or some delegate of the United Nations. That is the sum of what you have told us.

Mr. Ben Gurion: That is it. I must add something. If there had been no League of Nations, there would be no Mandatory now. You asked me whether we could have done it twenty years ago, and I told you that we would have been wiped out, as the Assyrians were in Iraq – although not so easily. But now, if there were no United Nations, and assuming for a moment that Britain says: “I walk out tomorrow,” or that the United Nations would say: “We have nothing to do with Palestine”, I think we would manage. It would be difficult. We would manage to bring in Jews, and as our work in Palestine is in its nature constructive, we would do it – under difficulties. We would try every day to come to the Arabs and say: “Let us have an agreement and settle the question by ourselves.” We would be willing to listen if they, in a spirit

of cooperation, would discuss a compromise. But if they said: “No”, we would go on by ourselves as far as we could. But there is a United Nations; there is a will in the world – I don’t say it is really a fact, but there is an ideal embodied in the World Organization. This question was referred to that Organization by the mandatory Power. Why did the Mandatory Power go to the United Nations? Last year they tried only to go to America; now they have gone to the United Nations. They also recognize that there may be a higher forum, which may have a higher moral authority. Therefore we come to you and say: If you admit that we are right, say so. In that case, our right should be enforced. But if you leave us alone, we will do what we can alone. We will defend ourselves by our own means and we will build by our own means. We will bring Jews by our own means. We will not give up.

Enactment of Land Regulations

Mr. Garcia Grandads (Guatemala): We will come back to that discussion later, because before that I would like to ask you a few questions about what you said in your speech. You spoke about the Land Regulations of 1940, and you said the racial law was a breach of international obligations under the Mandate. How was that law enacted?

Mr. Ben Gurion: It was enacted in this way. One day we were informed by the High Commissioner – it was, I think, in February 1940 – that at six o’clock in the afternoon, on a certain day, such an ordinance would be promulgated. I went immediately to see the High Commissioner, and asked him if he could postpone the promulgation for a few days and give me facilities to apply to London, because it would be a disaster. I also knew that there was a promise given to the Labor Party by Mr. Chamberlain’s Government that no new step would be taken under the White Paper to which they objected so strongly, and I knew they had not been consulted. The High Commissioner said: “I cannot do it; I have my orders that at six o’clock today, or tomorrow, it has to be promulgated.” Then after a few hours I received a call from the Chief Secretary that they had been instructed from London to hold it up, and he asked me what was the matter. I said: “Do you want me to explain why your Government is holding it up? I can imagine why it is” – knowing the promise given to the Labor Party in London. I said: “I can imagine that the Labor Party made a very strong protest, and therefore it was held up.” He told me that if there was any new development he would let me know. He said: “Keep yourself ready the whole night; perhaps there will be a call..” In the morning he rang me up and told me he had got a call from London to carry out the White Paper. It was promulgated in the Palestine Gazette that from now on, with retroactive effect to May 1939, a Jew could not acquire a tree, water, a piece of land, or a building, outside the five per cent zone which is called “free.” That is the story of the land law.

Mr. Garcia Grandads (Guatemala): On what legal grounds could the High Commissioner enact this law?

Mr. Ben Gurion: I prefer this question to be put to our legal adviser; I am not a lawyer.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): I do not know why we need to call on the opinion of legal advisers. The law is there, and every one of us is entitled to form an opinion on the law. Mr. Grandads, or I, or Mr. Loasaceae, can get as many opinions for our benefit as we like, but we

have to form our own opinions and declare what in our opinion is the law. I do not think the opinion of lawyers would be of any use to the Committee as such.

Mr. Garcia Grandads (Guatemala): I am following my interrogation, not yours. I hope the Jewish Agency will present their lawyers.

Interim Administration

We will now go back to the other question you were discussing with Mr. Hood. In your speech you declared that you were against a bi-national State. I must assume that is true. Now, as a last resort, there would be partition, or some other way out. At any rate, whither it is partition, or some other way, it would not be a bi-national state, according to your wish. In that case, what would be the necessity of a transitional period and of having an administration appointed by the United Nations? Could not the Jewish people, if they are going to form a Jewish state, take up immediately and carry on the administration by themselves, and defend themselves with their own resources?

Mr. Ben Gurion: I think you put the question in case you decide on a Jewish State in a partitioned Palestine.

Mr. Garcia Grandads (Guatemala): Or in case some other way is found of creating a Jewish State that would not be bi-national.

Mr. Ben Gurion: I will answer each part of the question separately. Assuming that the decision is satisfactory, there is no need for any transitional period. The administration can be established tomorrow.

As far as defense goes, I think the decision of the United Nations on the one hand, and on the other hand the ability of the Jews to defend themselves, will be sufficient.

Mr. Garcia Grandads (Guatemala): Regarding the question put by Mr. Hood, or by Mr. Blob, about an international police force, do you not think that in hearing the case the United Nations would appoint an administrator here? Would that administration not find among the Jewish people support enough to defend that administration and carry out its program?

Mr. Ben Gurion: Even the Mandatory Power, when it wanted, always found sufficient people among us to volunteer to defend the country.

Chairman: I think, Mr. Garcia Grandads, that you overlooked one factor in Mr. Ben Durion's previous answer. This transitional period was aimed at creating a Jewish majority, and that is the reason for the supervision.

Mr. Garcia Grandads (Guatemala): That is why I would like to ask you whether it refers to the whole of Palestine or to part of Palestine – the transitional period, I mean.

Mr. Ben Durion: I said that in a part of Palestine we do not need any transitional period. If it is the whole of Palestine, we may need a short transitional period.

Mr. Garcia Grandads (Guatemala): When you say a United Nations administration, do you mean that administration would be through any particular country, or that the United Nations would appoint a group of individuals to carry out the administration?

Mr. Ben Durion: I used the word “supervision” – not “administration.” I did not go as far as that. I did not lay down whether it should be an administration or not. I said it was a provision to ensure two things – peace and justice for the country. Whether they entrust one man to do it and to organize the forces – this, so far as we are concerned, can be left to the United Nations. We have no definite plan on that.

Mr. Garcia Grandads (Guatemala): Do you favor one man, or one country?

Mr. Ben Durion: I think that should be left to the United Nations. I cannot give you the answer to that question on behalf of the body I represent. We have not discussed that question.

The Hagana

Chairman: The question of Mr. Garcia Grandads suggests to me another question. What are the relations between the Jewish Agency and the Hagana?

Mr. Ben Durion: The relations between the Jewish Agency and the Hagana are the relations between the Jewish Agency and the Jewish population in Palestine. What you can the Hagana is a group of Jews who have been organized for at least the last forty years. When I was younger, I was myself a member of it.

Chairman: It is an independent organization?

Mr. Ben Durion: It is the Jews in Palestine established in an organization for defense.

Chairman: Is the Hagana armed?

Mr. Ben Durion: I hope they are.

Chairman: How large is the group?

Mr. Ben Durion: I cannot tell you, but I am sure if you want to see the people of the Hagana they will gladly appear before you, and they will be able to give you the actual information. I am not sure that they will be able to appear publicly, because it is not quite under existing Palestine laws. I am not sure that it is a legal organization.

Mr. Loasaceae (Czechoslovakia): So there is no organizational connection between the Hagana and the Jewish Agency?

Mr. Ben Durion: The Hagana is a Palestine Jewish affair.

Balfour Declaration

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): I find from your statement before the Anglo-American Committee that you did not, and do not, base the Jewish right to Palestine on what has come to be known as the Balfour Declaration. Have I understood you correctly?

Mr. Ben Durion: No. What I said was that the Jewish right to Palestine was prior to the Balfour Declaration. I do not think that is the same thing. Our right has existed for 3,500 years. The Balfour Declaration was merely a recognition by a Great Power of that right. The right existed before. That is what I said, and I maintain it now.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): I will try to find out a little more about that historical association from Rabbi Fishman and any other gentlemen you would like to produce. I will not burden you just now with regard to Biblical references. But I will take you into another part of the case for the time being. Is it true that before the making of what has come to be known as the Balfour Declaration, many different versions of the suggested formula were drafted by various members of the Zionist Political Committee shortly after the interview between Mr. Balfour and two highly respected Jews, Dr. Weizmann and Baron Rothschild?

Mr. Ben Durion: There were several drafts, it is true.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Are two of those drafts correctly printed on pages 163 and 164 of Jeffries?*

Mr. Ben Durion: I think that as Dr. Weizmann is to appear before you, I would not take it upon myself to answer questions of a historical nature of which I have no first-hand knowledge. As the person who knows is going to appear, I think it is best to put the question to him. I was not there. I was in the army when the Balfour Declaration was written.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): You have made a large number of statements of facts of which you did not have personal knowledge, but it is up to you to say whether these drafts are wrongly printed. I take it you do not know.

Mr. Ben Durion: I do not know. I have not read it, so I am unable to tell you what draft is there and what is not. I have not seen all the motions and all the drafts of the Balfour Declaration.

Chairman: Let us ask these questions of Dr. Weizmann.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): That will be my function. If I think it necessary, I shall do so. I am only asking him to read them. If he refuses to read them...

* J.M.N. Jeffries: Palestine the Reality (1939).

Mr. Ben Durion: I am reading, and I am sorry to say I cannot tell you; I have no reason to say that it is not correct, or that it is.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): That is quite enough for me. Could you say if Mr. Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, Sir Philip Magnus, and their associated in British Jewry, were apposed to the Balfour Declaration?

Mr. Ben Durion: Very much so.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): They did not want the establishment of even a National Home?

Mr. Ben Durion: No.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Much less a National State.

Mr. Ben Durion: They knew it was a National State, and they were against a Jewish State and a Jewish National Home and against Jews being Jews. They are assimilated Jews.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): You have just now seen these drafts. Assuming that these drafts are correctly printed, do you find that the words “National Home in Palestine” were substituted in the Balfour Declaration as it was printed, for the words “Palestine as the National Home of the Jewish people?”

Mr. Ben Durion: Yes, I know that in the White Paper of 19922, it is pointed out that it did not say “Palestine as a National Home” but “a National Home in Palestine.”

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): I am only trying to draw your attention. Do you find any difference between those two expressions?

Mr. Ben Durion: As far as the drafts are concerned, I told you I had not read them all.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): I am only asking if you see any difference in the fact that formerly the draft was “Palestine being a National Home”, while the real Balfour Declaration as it came out in November 1917 said “a National Home being in Palestine.” Do you find any difference between the words “Palestine being a National Home” and “a National Home being in Palestine?”

Mr. Ben Durion: I do not see any difference, except that when you say “Palestine as a National Home,” it may be interpreted to mean that the Arabs should be transferred from Palestine, and they did not want this, and rightly so.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): The words “National Home” were not defined, and they would not be known to international law until then.

Mr. Ben Durion: As far as I know, they were not. I am not an international lawyer.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Was Mr. Bentwich a Jewish international lawyer?

Mr. Ben Durion: He is still a Jew and, I think, still an international lawyer.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Did he define “National Home” in his book on the Mandatory System?^{*} Would you please read it?

Mr. Ben Durion: Do you want me to read it now? I cannot give you a judgment on what I am going to read now.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): I am only drawing your attention to Mr. Bentwich’s definition of a National Home.

Mr. Ben Durion: I think the best thing would be for you to read what he says.

Sir Abdul Rahman(India): I am just drawing your attention to that book. It signifies a territory in which a people without receiving rights of political sovereignty has nevertheless a recognized legal position and the opportunity of developing its moral, social and intellectual side. Is that how Mr. Bentwich understands that question?

Mr. Ben Durion: I will tell you what I understand it to mean. If you ask me to say whether these words are here, you do not need to, because they are. If you want to ask me what I understand by this, I will tell you. If you do not want me to , I will not.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Since you are not an international lawyer, I will not trouble you.

Mr. Ben Durion: If you want to draw my attention to it, I want to say what my opinion is.

Chairman: I would like to shorten the discussion. We are here to gain information, and it is perhaps not necessary to ask the opinion of the Jewish Agency on everything that is written on this subject. We can discuss it.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): No, that is not the case. The answers of Mr. Ben Durion have been given in a certain strain, and they assume that the words “National Home” mean a “National State.” I am trying to draw his attention to the fact that Jewish international lawyers who have written books have meant other wise: that is all. It is for your benefit, for my benefit, for everybody’s benefit.

Mr. Ben Durion: May I again tell you what is my view, because I believe you tried to draw my attention to something which is not there, and because I believe the first part of it says that when the Balfour Declaration was given it did not signify that it gave the Jews sovereign rights in Palestine, but it gave the Jews who were not here the right to come back and develop the country. That is, as far as I gather, what you mean. Secondly, maybe Mr. Bentwich has views different from the views of others. I do not see why Mr. Bentwich is not entitled to have his own views, and why his views should bind anyone else. I think the people who formulated the

^{*} N. Bentwich: The Mandates System (1930)/

Balfour Declaration knew as much about the meaning of it as Mr. Bentwich. The same thing is true for the Royal Commission. There were also lawyers among them.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): According to Mr. Balfour, this Declaration was in the nature of an adventure. He himself said so; is that not right?

Mr. Ben Durion: Maybe. If you have read it, I will take your word that he said so. You asked me whether he said so.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Yes.

Mr. Ben Durion: Well, if you tell me that Mr. Balfour said so, I will take your word for it.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Al right. Can you point to any document to show that there is any reference to the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine which was made to Mr. Balfour or to the British Cabinet before the issue of this Declaration?

Mr. Ben Durion: Before the issue of the Declaration? This is what was proposed to them.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Was any claim in regard to Palestine becoming a Jewish national state ever brought to the notice of Mr. Balfour or to the notice of the British Cabinet?

Mr. Ben Durion: Again I must tell you that, if you mean the British Cabinet at the time of Mr. Balfour, or before that, I am not really the person who can give you the historical evidence. I was quite young then. I was not elected to the Cabinet. I was simply a private in the army.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): In the statement published by Mr. Churchill in 1922 it was pointed out that any notion of Palestine being as Jewish as England is English was wholly wrong. Is that correct?

Mr. Ben Durion: That is correct.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Do you know that Lord Balfour made the following speech in the House of Lords on the 23rd March, 1922: "I cannot imagine any political interests exercised under greater safeguards than the political interests of the established population of Palestine. Every act of Government will be jealously watched. The Zionist organization has not attribution of political powers. If it uses or usurps political powers, it is an act of usurpation. Whatever else may happen in Palestine, of this I am confident, that under the British Government no form of tyranny racial or religious, will be permitted."

Mr. Ben Durion: That is a fact, of course. They had no political power in 1922. They have none now.

The First World War

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Was the First World War still going on when the Declaration of 1917 was made?

Mr. Ben Durion: It was still going on, yes.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): And there was more than one reason for making this Declaration?

Mr. Ben Durion: Really, I cannot answer as to the reasons.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Is it not a fact that Jewish soldiers were in those days fighting for Germany and the Axis powers?

Mr. Ben Durion: Jews in Germany fought for Germany. There were no Axis powers in 1917. The Axis powers arose long after the First World War, and your question does not apply. Jews in Germany, as German subjects, fought, and I think bravely, for Germany. And rightly so.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): I agree that the Axis powers came into being later, in the next World War, but I meant Germany and Turkey. Were Jews fighting for Germany in those days or not, in that war?

Mr. Ben Durion: Yes. Jews in Palestine, who were in the Turkish Army, fought in the Turkish Army. I wanted to stay, but I was expelled by Jemal Pasha. I told them I would come back as soon as possible. They said, we know you will try, but you will not come back. I was expelled with my colleague, who is now the President of the Jewish Community in Palestine, Mr. Ben Zvi. We were expelled together. We both came back as volunteers to fight against Jemal Pasha. We did not find him here any more.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Since you came to Palestine some forty-two years ago, you must have come to know that Arab nationalism had begun and was actually growing very much in 1914 and 1915.

Mr. Ben Durion: Well, I know a little differently. I came to Palestine, to be exact, forty-one years ago. I lived with Arabs. I must say that I lived mostly with the common man, with workers and peasants, because I was an agricultural worker. I did not find anywhere, among those Arabs with whom I had any contact, any political opposition or any political movement against Jews. I must tell you that even then a paper called "Carmel" was published in Haifa by a Christian Arab who tried to stir up anti-Semitic feelings against Jews. But among the Arabs I knew there was no political feeling, although there were quarrels and there were shootings between Arab villages and Jewish villages. But the feeling naturally grew, because the Arabs are the same as any other people in the world, and the national movement arose among the Arabs. I watched its rise and growth among the Arabs.

Mr. Ben Durion: No, not the Arabs in Palestine. The Arabs in Palestine fought with the Turks. And I do not blame them; it was natural that they should fight with the Turks.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): In Arabia, Syria, Transjordan was nationalism growing among the Arabs?

Mr. Ben Durion: Well, I happen to know the story of the First World war in those countries from personal experience, as I was living here. There were only a small number of Bedouin who from time to time attacked Turks when the opportunity offered itself. I never saw any Arabs fighting against the Turks, neither here, nor in Transjordan, nor in Syria, nor anywhere else. I do not want to imply by that the Arabs in Syria did not want to become independent of the Turks. But the fact is they did not fight against them.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Was a *Jihad* declared by Turkey, by the Ottoman ruler since he was the Caliph, and was it not resisted by the Arabs in Arabia, in Palestine, in Lebanon, in Syria and in other places, and was a declaration made by King Hussein?

Mr. Ben Durion: Sir, you are far from the reality if you think that a *Jihad* was needed to bring a Palestinian Arab to fight in the Turkish Army. He had to go into the army, and he had to fight. He was not asked whether he liked it or not. It was not necessary to ask him, nor did he have any view. He never heard of a *Jihad*. He knew he had to serve in the army, and he served in the army, as he had served for centuries. The Arabs have been serving in the Ottoman armies for centuries without any need for a *Jihad*.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Not only the Arabs. When the war was declared, every Moslem was bound to fight.

Mr. Ben Durion: No Moslem fought, except those who served in the army.

Meaning of Various Statements

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Mr. Ben Durion, do you wish to make any comments on the following declarations or statements on behalf of the British Government: (1) General Allenby's declaration, soon after the Turks were defeated, to the effect that he "reminded the Emir Feisal that the allies were in honor bound to endeavor to reach a settlement in accordance with the wishes of the peoples concerned, and urged him to place his trust whole-heartedly in their good faith;" (2) Commander Hogarth's statement to King Hussein in January, 1918, to the effect that the British Government were determined that, in so far as it was compatible with the freedom of the existing population, both economic and political, no obstacle should be put in the way of the return of the Jews to Palestine; (3) Basset's letter, dated 9th February, 1918, to King Hussein, to the effect that His Majesty's Government had hitherto made it their policy to ensure the Arabs' liberation, and it remained their policy that they were determined unflinchingly to pursue, by protecting such Arabs as were already liberated from all dangers and perils, and by assisting those who were still under the yoke of the tyrants to obtain their freedom; (4) the Anglo-French Declaration made on 7th November, 1918, to the effect that the goal envisaged by France and Great Britain in prosecuting the war in the East was to secure the complete and final liberation of the people who have for so long been oppressed by the Turks, and the setting up of national governments and administrations, which should derive authority from the free exercise of the

initiative and choice of the indigenous populations, and to further and assist in the setting up of indigenous Governments and administrations in Syria (from the Taurus range to the Egyptian frontier and Mesopotamia) which had already been liberated by the Allies, as well as in those territories which they were endeavoring to liberate, and to recognize them as soon as they were actually set up?

Mr. Ben Durion: No, sir.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Do you know anything about the Haycraft Commission, which was appointed to inquire into the Palestine disturbances of 1921?

Mr. Ben Durion: Yes, sir.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Have you read their recommendations?

Mr. Ben Durion: I believe I read them at the time.

Jewish Immigration and Arab Riots

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Did the Arabs ever raise any objections to the Jews visiting Palestine, or even to moderate immigration arising out of religious zeal before 1917?

Mr. Ben Durion: Before that the Arabs had nothing to say in Palestine. It was the Turks who had.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Was Jewish immigration the cause of Arab riots and bloodshed in Palestine?

Mr. Ben Durion: There was Jewish immigration, and there were riots. Maybe one was the cause of the other. It is a fact that there were both. Maybe there were other causes.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): When was this?

Mr. Ben Durion: 1936, 1937, 1938, 1939.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): There were no riots before 1936?

Mr. Ben Durion: There were.

Sir Abdul Ramman: What were they due to? What was the cause of them?

Mr. Ben Durion: There were many causes. One, for instance, was that in 1929 there was a false accusation made against us by some people that we had attacked the Mosque of Omar. This was the cause of serious riots, when the entire Jewish community of Hebron, where there had been no immigration, was exterminated.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Was immigration between 1931-1939 in Palestine to the extent of 218,000, while in the whole of the United States of American, Brazil, Australia and the Argentine, an area two hundred times larger than Palestine, the immigration was only to the extent of 207,000?

Mr. Ben Durion: Those are fact, yes.

Birobidjan

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): What do you know about the Jewish state of Birobidjan?

Mr. Ben Durion I have heard about it.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): As a foreign state?

Mr. Ben Durion: I think it is an autonomy, but I really cannot give exact details.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): So you do not know whether it contains about thirty thousand square miles and only about one hundred thousand Jews?

Mr. Ben Durion: I know that Soviet Russia is such a vast country that it may contain such a large area as you say, but really I cannot tell you.

Sir Abdul Rahma (India): Do you know if it is really a state?

Mr. Ben Durion: No, as far as I know it is not. It is an autonomy, and it is loyal to that autonomous condition. There is only a Jewish minority, as far as I know, but I do not know. I am not an expert on it, and I don not know why I must give this information.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): I just wanted to know whether the official language of that place is Yiddish.

Mr. Ben Durion: So far as I know it is not.

Religious Affairs

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Palestine is sacred to Christians, it is sacred to Moslems; therefore would you permit all the Moslems and all the Christians to come and settle down in Palestine on the same basis on which you want to settle down in Palestine?

Mr. Ben Durion: There is a difference. Of course it is sacred to Christians. You are a Moslem, and you say it is sacred to Moslems. I take your word for it.

Sir Abdul Rahman(India): You do not know about it?

Mr. Ben Durion: Your authority is sufficient for that purpose. But Jews come to Palestine because it is their country; it has been their homeland for 3,500 years. In addition to that it is sacred to them, because it is the center of their religion. I know that Rome is sacred to Christians, but no Christian will ask the right to possess Rome. There is nothing like that here. We are here on the basis of the fact that it is the country of our people; we were dispossessed by force, but we did not give up. We are coming back to our home.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): I will come to that part a little later. I just wanted to know, because you know that the Moslems used to turn to the holy area of Masjid Aqsa as their Kaaba until the Prophet ordered faces to be turned towards Mecca at the time of prayer.

Mr. Ben Durion: I am really afraid to contradict you, but the history I know regarding Moslems is that at the beginning the Prophet called them to turn to Jerusalem, and there were other things which he accepted in Jerusalem, but later on, when the Jews were living in Arabia, they refused to accept it, and many of them, especially Jews of Medina, died for it, because they refused to accept him as a prophet. He told his people to turn to Mecca, but so far as I know it has nothing to do with the reconstruction of Mecca.

*Sir Abdul Ramman (India) :*That was the Kaaba in Mecca - ...

Mr. Ben Durion: This is a discussion which does not concern me, as it is a religious matter.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): I just wanted to know. How many synagogues were there in Palestine before 1919?

Mr. Ben Durion: I have no information.

Zionism and a "Jewish Kingdom"

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Did the President of the Tenth Zionist Congress, held in June 1931, make the following speech: "Only those suffering from gross ignorance or actuated by malice could accuse us of the desire of establishing an independent Jewish Kingdom. The people who allege this seem, so far as they are honest, to confuse Zionism with the Messianic belief. Our boundless love for Palestine owed its origin also to this belief, but it has never occurred to us modern practical Zionists to introduce Messianic tendencies into our movement."

Mr. Ben Durion: I do not know. As far as I remember, the President at that congress made no such statement.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): You cannot say whether anyone else made the statement? I am just trying to be clear in my mind about the question, but it may have been someone else.

Mr. Ben Durion: All kinds of persons make all kinds of statements, and I really cannot be expected to remember every one of them.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Apart from the Zionists' attempts, have any other Jews made attempts to gain political sovereignty in Palestine? Have any other persons made any attempt to create a sovereign state in Palestine?

Mr. Ben Durion: Yes, Jews throughout history – before the Crusades. During the Crusades all the Jews were exterminated in Palestine. After that, in the time of the Turks, they made these attempts by going back to Palestine and trying to build it up, because they believed that by building it up they were re-establishing, as they called it in their language, a Jewish kingdom. We do not now use the word kingdom, but what they meant was a State. There was a time when a kind of treatise was written by one of the Turkish soldiers, a high official in Turkey, on the movement to build a part of Palestine as a Jewish province.

Jewish Frontier Settlements

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): How far is the southernmost Jewish colony in the Negev from the Egyptian frontier?

Mr. Ben Durion: I imagine it is some ten kilometers. I cannot give you the exact figure. I do not know, although I have been there. Perhaps twenty kilometers.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): And are there any Jewish colonies near the Syrian frontier?

Mr. Ben Durion: Yes, there are.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): How many and how far? Just give me the figures.

Mr. Ben Durion: There are many Jews on the frontier. There is one colony outside the frontier of the Lebanon. There is a colony where the frontier is in the middle of the colony.

Picketing Ordinance

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Was any picketing ordinance passed legalizing picketing by the Jews of Arab labor in 1940 or thereabouts?

Mr. Ben Durion: No, there was picketing at many times, and there was a time when I had the privilege of taking part in it. Then Jews were excluded from work in Jewish colonies.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Was the picketing ordinance passed?

Mr. Ben Durion: Yes, the picketing ordinance was passed.

Sir ABDUL Ramman (India): Was it some time in 1940 or thereabouts?

Mr. Ben Durion: No, not in 1940. It was long before that.

Immigration and Jewish-Arab Relations

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Is it possible for you to imagine that any country in the world – Canada, Australia, the United States of America, South Africa or England – will permit Jewish immigration in unlimited numbers, if they are exposed to the risk of being outnumbered?

Mr. Ben Durion: I do not feel any need to imagine such a thing. If you mean to ask why we want to come to Palestine, I have told you it is because we are coming back to our country. But I do not know why you want me to imagine that such a thing could happen except in our country. Of course we do not imagine, we could not imagine such a thing. On the contrary, I told you in my opening speech that we were offered space in another country, in Africa: we refused it on that account, because we did not consider it our country.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Do you imagine the friendship between the Jews and the Arabs will increase if unlimited immigration is permitted in Palestine?

Mr. Ben Durion: I imagine that when the Jews are reestablished as an independent nation they will establish good relations between themselves and their neighbors. Without it, no. There will be trouble with the Arabs, who think they could do with the Jews what the Europeans did with them.

Sir Abdul Ramman I(India): Have the relations between Arabs and Jews been very strained since the Mandate?

Mr. Ben Durion: As I said, relations between individual Jews and Individual Arabs were often very good in Turkish times, and they are very good now, but political relations between Arab communities and Jewish communities are not so good, and this is because they have been brought into opposition.

Palestine in Ancient Jewish History

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Who was in possession and occupation of Palestine, as it is know today, before the Israelites?

Mr. Ben Durion: There were a large number of people who came here – there are many names. The names are supplied in our Bible.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): All of them have died out?

Mr. Ben Durion: Yes, all of them.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): All of them, and their descendants have died out?

Mr. Ben Durion: Yes, they disappeared.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): And the fellahin who exist in Palestine today, are they descendants?

Mr. Ben Durion: I don not think so.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Do you know that Abraham had two wives – at least, two wives with who we are concerned – Hagar and Sarah? Sarah was the first, and Hagar was the second. Ishmael was the son of Hagar; Isaac was the son of Sarah. Is that correct?

Mr. Ben Durion: Yes.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Now it was predicted in the Bible – when I refer to the Bible I mean the Old Testament, I do not refer to the New Testament at all – it was predicted in the Old Testament that twelve tribes would spring from Israel.

Mr. Ben Durion: It is said in the Bible, with regard to these two children, that “to Isaac and the seed of Isaac I will give this land.”

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): When did the Jews leave Palestine?

Mr. Ben Durion : They never left it.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): They have always been here?

Mr. Ben Durion: Yes, except in the period of the Crusades, when all Jews were entirely exterminated.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): When was that?

Mr. Ben Durion: You know it was the 10th, 11th and 12th centuries.

Sir Abdul Ramman: Did Titus deal very cruelly with the Jews?

Mr. Ben Durion: You can rely only on the historical documents which exist. I mean that he was cruel. He destroyed the Temple, expelled their leaders, put them to death in circuses in Rome, sold them as slaves.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): And that was in the first century A.D.?

Mr. Ben Durion: Yes, but he did not expel all the Jews – some 60 years after that the Jews made war on the Romans, and 600,000 Jews were killed by the Roman legions.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): When was that?

Mr. Ben Durion: That was in 130 A.D.

Arab Villages Wiped out?

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Now one thing more. I am giving you a list of the Arab villages which I am told were wiped out, and I ask you whether this is correct or not: Shatta, Afuleh, Jeidah, Tab'oon, Jingar, Mdjdel, Jisr al-Majme, Tel Adas, Jallood, Sasafeh, Tel Esh-Shamaam, Al-Hartiya, Sheikh Breik, Hrief, Defna, Khan ed-Duer, Madekheli, Khayyan al-Walid, Cofarta, Jadra, Kirdana, etc. Have these Arab villages been erased? Do they exist now as Arab villages?

Mr. Ben Durion: I am grateful to the people who gave you this material for giving us the opportunity to speak about that. I want, not only yourself, but the whole Committee to know about it. One of our witnesses will tell you the whole story, and not merely in a "yes or no" manner, as you require.*

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): You will give me the information later on.

Mr. Ben Durion: You will get the information later on, and I am very grateful that you raised the question.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): When the statements were made by Jews that no Arabs had been displaced, I wanted to verify it.

Mr. Ben Durion: It is your job to do that.

Recent Jewish Land Purchases

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Now is it correct that, in spite of the restrictive measures, the Jews have been actually acquiring lands from the Arabs?

Mr. Ben Durion: Yes, in a restricted way. It is correct, for the last few years since 1939.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Will you kindly give me all the figures on the division of lands acquired in breach of the regulations?

Mr. Ben Durion: It was not in breach of the regulations. It was in accordance with them. You will get the figures for all these years from 1939 until the present moment.** It is a pity these regulations could not have been dropped; it was in accordance with the regulations.

Room for New Immigrants

Chairman: Have you more questions on the political issue?

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Yes. Do you think that politically there is room in this country both for the Arabs and unlimited numbers of Jews.

* See Mr. Shertok's second statement, p. 489 ff. below.

** Ibid., p. 494 below.

Mr. Ben Durion: First of all, there is no such thing as unlimited numbers of Jews. There is a limited number of Jews.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): Unlimited number of immigrants, then?

Mr. Ben Durion: They are limited. For the last 40 years I have done nothing but study this problem, because it is a matter of life and death for me and my people. I say it is my conviction, and not merely my belief, that there is room in this country for every inhabitant in Palestine who is here already, whether Jew, Christian, Armenian, Arab, Moslem or any other, and several millions of Jews to come in. I am not able to fix the exact number, because this depends on a number of factors, mostly on the degree of development, and the degree of authority to have such a development.

Sir Abdul Ramman (India): I hope you remember my question. I am not talking economically, but politically.

Mr. Ben Durion: Then I do not understand quite what you mean. You asked me about room: that is, whether there is room, and that is an economic question. But if you ask me about it politically then it is no question at all. Politically, for instance, I can imagine a vast territory where not a single Jew can enter, although there are millions of square miles of land. They are two different questions, and politics has nothing to do with room.

Federal State

Chairman: I should like to put the same question that we put to Dr. Weizmann. What about a federal state? I do not imply by that that we are especially interested in a federal state. We just want to explore the possibilities.

Mr. Ben Durion: We will not consider any settlement which excludes complete independence and equality as a nation with the Arabs in this country. If in any way a settlement is made where we are not a nation, and which would deprive us of equality as a nation, we will have to be against it, because we consider two things as vital for our very existence and our human dignity, and these two vital issues are: one, the right of the Jew who is unhappy, uncomfortable, oppressed, discriminated against, or for any other reason cannot stay where he is – that, if there is economically a place in Palestine for him, he should have a right to come and settle here; the second is that the Jewish people as a whole, in its own country, should have the same status as any free people in the world. If the world abolishes separate sovereignties, we will bless it; but whatever regime that is in the world for any other free nation, we claim for our people – not less and not more.

We will oppose any discrimination against the Jewish people, but if you ensure our independence and equality as a nation, which also includes membership of the United Nations – for the welfare of those who are in the country and for the welfare of our neighbors, it will be necessary that the Jewish state should cooperate with the neighboring states. We are the first to

welcome it, even if that cooperation does not limit itself merely to economic, social and cultural matters. If our neighbors are willing to cooperate politically as a regional organization, we will welcome it, and ties will be created between us and the neighboring states, as agreed upon freely, and as desired by the United Nations. This may be the main consideration, but the condition is that we should be an equal partner.

So an independent Jewish state does not exclude cooperation with sympathetic states in the Middle East states or any other foreign states. We need this cooperation. It is essential for our really endless work.

Chairman: Do you give preference to a federal state or to a partition scheme?

Mr. Ben Durion: We want to have a state of our own, and that state can be federated if the other state or states are willing to do so in the mutual interest, on condition that our state is in its own right a member of the United Nations.

Jerusalem and the Holy Places

Chairman: One other question which has not been raised before. Do you think the Holy Places would require a special arrangement for Jerusalem?

Mr. Ben Durion: Certainly. Not only in Jerusalem; all the Holy Places should be so safeguarded internationally that religious people who have a special interest in those Holy Places should have free and unfettered access to them, and, as far as possible, the custody should be placed in their hands. I cannot go further, because I know what trouble it may make among Christian communities, but this ought to be left to a higher authority. But certainly there must be international guarantees for the freedom and sanctity of all the Holy Places.

Chairman: Do you think trusteeship or something of that kind with regard to Jerusalem would be necessary?

Mr. Ben Durion: No, the question of the Holy Places is really a mix-up. The Holy Places are only a few places in Jerusalem. They are not Jerusalem. They are in the Old City. But you should not identify the Holy Places with Jerusalem or with any other city in Palestine. They are in various spots. There is a Holy Place in Bethlehem for the Christians. There is a Holy Place in Nazareth. There are Holy Places for Jews, Christians and Moslems in Jerusalem. Here in Jerusalem "Holy Places" means only a certain part of Jerusalem, but Jerusalem itself is not a part of those Holy Places, and therefore for the safeguarding of those places you ought not to exclude Jerusalem as a whole, outside of the Holy Places.

Social And Economic Gulf between Jews and Arabs

Mr. Garcia Salazar (Peru): I do not know whether the point I am going to raise has been raised already. I sincerely believe that the Jewish people wish to live peacefully with the Arab people and to cooperate with them for the common good, but the situation in Palestine does not seem to be leading that way. Both peoples seem to be leading separate lives. In normal life there are towns like Tel Aviv for the Jews, or Gaza or Hebron, which are only Arab in population. All of these are either wholly Jewish or wholly Arab. The schools, too, are separate. There is a school for Jewish children and a school for Arab children. There are separate technical schools for both of them, and even the University is practically a Jewish University. In industry, Jewish industry employs Jewish labor, and Arab industry employs Arab labor. Even the trade unions are separate. Do you not think that this physical and spiritual separation is making the cooperation that you want and that everybody wants more and more difficult?

Mr. Ben Durion: I think what you mentioned is a fact, and a very important fact, in the life of this country – that there is a separation or, I might say, a distinction in economic life, in habitation, in culture, in schools, as you enumerated. It is true. But I do not think this precludes future cooperation between Jews and Arabs, just as I do not believe that because Britain and France have a distinct economy, language, and tradition, they cannot cooperate. And although they quarreled – for many centuries each regarded the other as its main enemy – since, I believe, 1940 there has been a very strong and growing cooperation between these two countries. So the fact that people live separately and distinctly need not preclude cooperation. On the contrary, we see the opposite phenomena: people having the same language and the same state of culture quarreling among themselves and fighting each other. It does not follow necessarily that people, in order to cooperate, must use the same language; it does not follow necessarily that people using the same language cannot quarrel and make wars against one another.

There are deep reasons why the Jews had to build new villages and towns. One reason was that they did not want to take away anything from the people who were here. Secondly, they could not live on the same level. But this does not mean that the Jew living in his village and speaking Hebrew, and the Arab living in his village and speaking Arabic, cannot cooperate in such matters as guarding against thieves, against epidemics, and in other such matters. And there are cases of such cooperation. But this is on a small scale. We are convinced that as soon as the Jews are equalized on the plane of statehood, perhaps not in one single day, but owing to the necessity of both peoples and the two established facts, there will be cooperation between them in spite of the fact that they live their own lives. We live our Jewish life, and they live their Arab life. We do not see any difficulty in cooperating because of that.

Self-Determination

Mr. Entezam (Iran): I have only one question, but before I put it to Mr. Ben Durion, I should like to tell him that I was very much touched by his allusion to the Emperor of Persia, and that it was at that time Persia which rendered a service to the people of Israel.

The question I have is as follows. As I see it, Mr. Ben Durion admits to only one solution, and that is an independent state of Palestine. It is quite evident that on that point Mr. Ben Durion and the Arabs are in full agreement. Both want an independent state, and both want a democratic state. I insist on the words “democracy” and “democratic state” because, in the first place, it is a fashionable and popular expression at present, and also because it means rule by the majority. The only difference between the Arabs and the Jewish people on this point is that the Arabs say “establish that independent state now;” whereas the Jewish people say “don’t do it now, but wait until we have a majority in the country.”

If we admit that Palestine is a special case and might need special treatment, can we at the same time accept, under the question of delay, the principle of self-determination? It seems to me that it is difficult to admit at the same time that you must delay until an independent state is established, and also admit the principle of self-determination. This is the question I have.

Mr. Ben Durion: I want first of all to tell the representative of Iran that while we have to forget, and we do forget, all the evil things done to us, we never forget the good things which have been done to us, and that is not only in relation to Persia.

As to the question of the representative of Iran, it really raises the whole issue. But I want first of all to say that it is not quite the same thing – assuming that we talk about a democratic state as a state where all citizens are absolutely (here I can use the word “absolute,” because either it is equality or it is not) equal, whatever they are: Jews, Arabs, Moslems, or any other nationality or religion; for the state required by the Arabs, as expressed officially by the Arab delegation and by the Arab League, is one in which they want to have one discrimination – against the Jews, that they should not be free as equal citizens to settle: not the Jews outside Palestine, but the Jews who are citizens in a so-called democratic Palestine state should not be able to settle wherever they like. So it is not quite the same. From the beginning they want to build a state on racial discrimination.

But here is the real issue. It is not a question merely of time: they want it now, and we want it after a certain period. Formally, it may look so, but I think it would be unfair on my side to make the whole question merely a question of time, to say we also want to have a democratic state, not now but after a certain number of years. It is quite a different thing. What we say is that here we, the Jewish people, have a state and have a right. No state, no political regime can be created in accordance with justice, with history or with international law, which recognizes this Jewish state and this Jewish right, but precludes the realization of our right. And our right consists of two things: our right to immigrate into Palestine, and to immigrate as of right, not as a Jew immigrating to America. When I immigrated into America, America was free. I myself was expelled by the Turks from Palestine, and went to America without a passport – I had not got a passport, because all my papers were taken from me. I came to America in 1915. At that time the Jews or any other persons from Europe, could immigrate freely into America. But they did not immigrate as of right, because America could say: yes, you are free to immigrate – or America could say, no. There was a time when she said yes, and there was a time when she said no. But the French Government, or the British Government, or the Persian Government, cannot say to a French, or a British or a Persian national, you have no right to come back as of right. This is our right in this country, and in this country only. I am giving you our view, which I

believe is the view of international law and of human conscience, as far as we have known it until now. This is our right, and we say it will be wrong to create political conditions that will rob us of our right.

This is done in many countries. I will give you an example, although it is not quite the same. In the District of Columbia in the United States there are people living – over a million, more than the number of Jews in Palestine – and they have no right of self determination. They have not the right which every American has in every American State, to elect their own Governor. They were deprived of it because their home is in the central place which belongs to all the forty-eight States; and because they have the privilege of living there, they have not the right which the citizen of Ohio, of Minnesota, or of any other State has.

When there is an over-riding right which may displace that right of self-determination, no country will recognize the right of self-determination, let us say, of one of their dependents to be independent. There are certain rights of self-determination – and I say that the right of the Jew to come back to his country, and the right of our people to be here as an equal partner in the world family, is an over-riding right which applies to Palestine. Therefore no regime should be created which will make that right impossible of realization. It is not a matter of time only, and it can be safeguarded only if there is independence, and if the Jews are in the majority. Then the Jew will be able to come back if he is persecuted. I am not naming any country, but if he is in danger of being murdered or persecuted anywhere, he will be able to come back if there is a place for him, because the majority will see to it. And the Jewish people as a whole – not every Jew – will enjoy the same status as any other people. This is the crucial point, and not the matter of time.

Partition or Federation?

Mr. Loasaceae (Czechoslovakia): I presume that Mr. Ben Durion has listened to the statement of Dr. Weizmann, which was acknowledged with enthusiastic applause by the public. This statement favors a partition of Palestine into two states. I should like to hear the opinion of Mr. Ben Durion on this scheme – not his personal opinion because it is more or less known, but the opinion of the Jewish Agency. I am not asking for an immediate answer. I should prefer very much a considered opinion of the Jewish Agency after deliberation. If I may ask, I should like to see included in this considered opinion the point of view of the Jewish Agency on the possible federation scheme of these two states – a Jewish State and an Arab State – in Palestine after the partition. I do not mean any rigid federation, but rather a sort of loose confederation, a type in which the independent character of the Jewish State should be completely set for the. I put the question, but I am not asking for an immediate answer.

Mr. Ben Gurion: I will make two remarks on that. One is that Dr. Weizmann is thought so well of by the Jewish people, and occupies such a place in our history and among us, that he is entitled to speak for himself without any public mandate. You heard his views. I also had the pleasure of listening to them. As you do not insist on my giving you the answer now about the scheme of partition, I will not do it, but I will tell you what we told the Government last year and this year: that while we believe and request that our right, at least to the Western part of Palestine, should be granted in full, and Western Palestine be made a Jewish State – which we believe possible, and to which we have a right – we are willing to consider an offer of a Jewish

State in an area which means less than the whole of Palestine. We will consider it. But I am glad you do not want me to give a complete scheme.

On the question of federation I made it clear before that it depends really on what you mean by the word “federation.” When you say “federation of states,” you mean that the Jewish State would be an independent state. I will give you an example – Australia, for instance. Although Australia belongs to the British Commonwealth of Nations, Australia is independent. Then Britain makes war, Australia may remain neutral: and when Australia makes war, Britain need not follow suit. It has its own representative in the United Nations, although it is tied up with a larger group in a free commonwealth.

If you mean that the Jewish State should be federated with other states while remaining an independent state with membership of the United Nations, then we are perfectly willing. In fact, we would welcome it, if this were for the benefit of all the peoples in this region, and if this were the desire of the United Nations. But if you mean the Jewish State should be a part of a federated state, as New York State is a part of the United States, that is a denial of the Jewish State and Jewish independence. We would be against this. Such a scheme as this cannot mean a Jewish State.

Mr. Loasaceae (Czechoslovakia): I think you did not hear when I spoke about a loose confederation.

Mr. Ben Gurion: I say we will be ready to enter not a loose federation, but a much closer federation with free and equal states as a free and equal people, whether confederate or federate. This does not preclude the federation of a Jewish State with some of the neighboring states.