

The Biltmore Program, David Ben Gurion (11 May 1942)

Ben Gurion, David. "The Biltmore Program." Extraordinary Zionist Conference. Biltmore Hotel. 11 May 1942. Address.

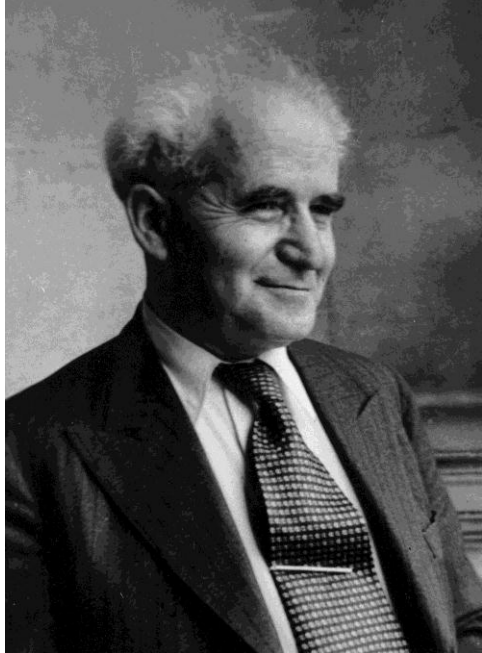


Figure 1 David Ben-Gurion (shown here c. 1930) showed enormous foresight in galvanizing the potentially potent forces American Jewry in support of Zionism (CZA Photos).

By the 1930s, David Ben-Gurion saw multiple reasons for linking the Zionist objective of Jewish self-determination to the United States government and to American Jewry. The presentation of the "Biltmore Program" in 1942 officially commenced his effort, which had started quietly in the late 1930s, to persuade and recruit American Jewry to support Zionism. Asserting himself in America with American Zionists also had benefits for Ben-Gurion in the realm of internal Zionist politics; he continued his dominance over world Zionist politics, slowly diminishing the influence of Chaim Weizmann (who preferred continued reliance on Great Britain) and gathering support for the left-wing Zionist Labour movement at the expense of Jabotinsky's revisionist right-wing ideology.

For American Zionism, the May 1942 conference at the Biltmore Hotel in New York City galvanized a weak, fractured movement. It did not end personal or political rivalries, but pushed American Zionists toward a common path of advocating for the Jewish national home. The philosophical differences that remained among American Zionist leaders after Biltmore centered

on whether a pragmatic, gradual approach or a more politically active engagement with Jews and non-Jews in the U.S. was more advantageous. In the middle of the war, there were American Jews who were more committed to trying to rescue Jews from Nazi oppression than to working in support of a Jewish state in Palestine.

Ben-Gurion's foresight in aligning more closely with the United States than with Great Britain was remarkably beneficial. Ben-Gurion witnessed the souring of Zionist relations with Great Britain from the mid-1930s onward. He saw London's Arab interests changing from what was once a pro-Zionist orientation to one that was more neutral, and finally to one that was outright antagonistic. In addition, he recognized that if the Zionists could achieve a close relationship with Jews and American politicians in the United States, the Zionists would be in a more advantageous diplomatic position whenever the war ended. The combination of Ben-Gurion's foresight, the 'Biltmore' speech (which signaled the shift of Zionist efforts from Great Britain to the United States), and the knowledge of Hitler's goal to eradicate the Jewish people contributed to an emerging consensus that Jews needed a state of their own; the question was when and how.

Key members of the Roosevelt Administration's opposition, indifference, and anti-Semitism remained as difficult hurdles for Jewish political activists during this period.

After the 1929 disturbances in Palestine, Zionist leaders sought to use the influence of American Jews to mobilize against an emerging unfavorable British policy toward Zionism. David Ben-Gurion stated in 1933 that the existence of "Jewish personalities with connections

and important positions in government” yielded “the necessity for political action in America” for the sake of the Zionist cause.¹ In 1937, he wrote a letter to Rabbi Stephen Wise, a leading American Zionist, in which he noted that “the political power” of Jews in the United States, unequalled elsewhere, would make the difference “in the life and death struggle ahead.”²

It was common for Jewish Agency members who visited America to point to the lack of American Jewry’s support for Zionism. However, when Ben-Gurion visited America in 1939, he sought to invigorate and organize the local Zionist movement, which by almost all accounts had lost its way. He believed that American Jews, their Zionist leadership, and their organization were sorely deficient in articulating a bold view for Jewish self-determination. Ben-Gurion said that, “More and more, England must look to America as the only great power to which it could look for help in case of war, and more than ever America can demand certain things from England. It’s America, America alone that can save us. We must have a new birth of Zionism in America which will grip all... The five million Jews of America can- must- do the trick politically and financially.”³

Despite the hopes he held for American Zionism, Ben-Gurion believed that the American Zionist organization at the time was woefully inadequate to meet the challenges that lay ahead. Beneath this inadequacy, Ben-Gurion believed, laid an ambivalent commitment to Palestine as a Jewish national home. Facing a resurgence of anti-Semitism and a strong anti-war sentiment in America, American Jews were reluctant to become involved in international issues of any kind, particularly opposing the 1939 White Paper or supporting the British Mandate, which could result in accusations of divided or treasonous loyalties. Ben-Gurion regarded American Jewish caution as nothing more than cowardice. He argued that Jews should not remain neutral on the issue of Zionism — that was an “anti-Zionist position.” He continued, saying that, “This has nothing to do with loyalty ... our efforts must be aboveboard, and American Jewry must know that, where internal issues are concerned, they must speak out, ...[they] are obligated to help their brothers—as Jews.”⁴

Many American Zionists did not believe that criticism of the White Paper or any agitation against Britain was advantageous during wartime. For example, Rabbi Stephen Wise articulated the view that the Zionist struggle must move to the background. He believed that if American Zionists supported the Allied war effort, this support would put them in good standing in the post-war world.⁵ Accordingly, he believed that any protest against Britain must be restrained; American Zionists, as he put it, should “shout in low tones.”⁶ This was not a position that Ben-Gurion could or would support. Ben-Gurion argued that British hostility was making the continued building of the Zionist homeland impossible, and that the Zionists needed to move forward regardless of British opposition. Weizmann, with whom Wise maintained close relations, shared Wise’s opinion. The argument was not really about eventual aims; rather, the issue was how soon and in what way American Zionists should play an active role in advancing the statehood idea.

¹ Brown, Michael *The Israeli-American Connection: Its roots in the Yishuv, 1914-1945*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit (1996), p.223.

² *Ibid.*, p.225.

³ Gal, Allon. *David Ben-Gurion and the American Alignment for a Jewish State*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington (1985), p.74.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.94.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

From Ben-Gurion's perspective, Zionist aims could only be realized through a campaign of public pressure and protest, even in the midst of the war. To this end, he believed it was essential that Zionists advance a concrete demand for a state in the immediate future and then spend both political and monetary capital to achieve their aims. Ben-Gurion chose to fight this battle in America because he believed that if he were able to win in America, he could use that momentum to carry the rest of the Zionist movement with him.

Ben-Gurion consistently tried to sway American Zionists toward a position that blended support for Britain's struggle against Nazi Germany with rejection of the White Paper's contents. He articulated his policy most memorably at the outset of the war, when he declared that Zionists, "Must help the [British] army as if there were no White Paper, and we must fight the White Paper as if there were no war." Ben-Gurion refined this position when he argued, "If we forget the White Paper, we renounce Zionism; if we forget the war, we renounce everything." As contradictory as these statements seem, they provided a way forward for Zionists confused about their conflicting loyalties, paving a path for simultaneous support against fascism and denunciation of British attempts to sabotage the Jewish homeland. The realization of these policies ultimately proved instrumental in the creation of the state. The relevant events of 1939 — the outcome of the London Conference at St. James Palace and the outbreak of war in Europe — convinced Ben-Gurion that the time had come to launch a full-court press to create a Jewish state. The next step, he knew, would be convincing American Jewry to join him.

From 1940 until 1942, Ben-Gurion spent the equivalent of a full year in the United States. During that time, he worked ceaselessly to convert the American Zionist establishment to his view that a state should be the immediate goal of Zionist policy. As Nahum Goldmann, a Zionist leader who had moved to America in the 1930s, observed only half-admiringly, "He [Ben-Gurion] does not mind being contradicted and ... even respects colleagues who dare to stand up to him. But, while contradiction does not provoke him, it has no effect. Ben-Gurion ignores it. He is the most single-minded, undeviating Zionist leader of my generation."⁷ This was the style that Ben-Gurion used to great effect on American Zionists. Initially, in his call for a Jewish state, Ben-Gurion faced a great deal of resistance; in the end, it seemingly bounced off of him, transforming American Zionism in his image rather than the other way around.



Figure 2 (R) Rabbi Stephen S. Wise (shown here c. 1938 alongside Henry Morgenthau) was among the American Jewish leaders who opposed Ben-Gurion's continued promotion of the Zionist cause during wartime (*Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, no known restrictions)

⁷ Goldmann, Nahum. *The Autobiography of Nahum Goldmann*, Translated by Helen Sebba, Holt, Reinhart, and Winston, Chicago (1969), p.291.

While Ben-Gurion patiently took the time to line up American Jewish support for the idea of statehood, he and hundreds of colleagues were developing the appropriate conditions on the ground through official, public channels as well as private actions undertaken in Palestine. The Zionists in Palestine, though severely constrained by a lack of funding, continued to develop an economic infrastructure, to buy parcels of land, and to establish new settlements. Ben-Gurion's public call for a state took place while the framework and substance of the Jewish State were in advanced stages of construction.

In the United States, Ben-Gurion confronted pockets of American Jewish opposition on two fronts. First, some American Zionists who had no intention of immigrating to Palestine took issue with the realization of the Balfour Declaration. They preferred the idea of a spiritual home in Palestine rather than a physical center for world Jewry. The second camp of opponents were those who favored Weizmann, believing that it was inappropriate or untimely to declare the intention of a Jewish state, thus forsaking the previous support from Great Britain. Supporters of this view included leading American Zionists Rabbi Steven Wise, Louis Lipsky, and Nahum Goldmann. Goldmann believed that it would be suicidal to declare a Jewish state while Jews were still a minority in Palestine;⁸ furthermore, given the dire condition of world Jewry in 1942, it seemed to Goldmann that this was the wrong time to declare a state. In general, some American Jews worried that declaring a state without an agreement with the Arabs would lead to avoidable bloodshed. According to this view, even expounding the idea of a Jewish state rather than merely a homeland was, at that time, dangerous and even immoral.⁹

In 1942, Ben-Gurion outlined his goals at the Biltmore Conference of American Zionists, held at the Biltmore Hotel in New York City in May 1942. It was attended by over six-hundred Zionist delegates from all over the United States. Several key issues were raised at the conference: reaffirmation of the Balfour Declaration and the need for a Jewish state, the status and future of Arab-Zionist relations, and the place of Britain and the United States in the future of the Zionist movement.

The text of Ben-Gurion's remarks revealed yet again that Ben-Gurion had no problem reconciling support for Great Britain and the Allies in their fight against the Nazis with a strong rejection of the 1939 White Paper. In an effort to court his American audience, he made deliberate syntactical choices. Using the term "commonwealth" (rather than state) throughout



Figure 3 Nahum Goldmann was among those Jewish leaders who felt it unwise to declare a Jewish state while the Jews remained a minority in Palestine (Photo Courtesy of American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, 2011. www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org.)

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

⁹ Ben-Gurion believed that ultimately, negotiations with the Arabs would prove fruitless. Ben-Gurion's view was coldly practical; there was little hope for understanding between the Arab and Jewish communities of Palestine because Arabs had rational, existential reasons for opposing the core goals of Zionism. He did not believe that enlightenment or the understanding of practical benefits for the Arabs in Palestine would soften Arab resistance to Zionism; he did not believe that bi-nationalism or parity with the Arabs offered a solution; he did not believe that transfer of the Arab population outside of Palestine was a prerequisite for large Jewish immigration to Palestine; and he believed that Jewish development could provide for the present and future population (Gal).



Figure 4 Chaim Weizmann, who continued to focus on maintaining Zionist relations with the British (rather than Americans), was dismissive of the significance of the Biltmore Conference. (CZA Photos)

his speech at the Biltmore Conference, Ben-Gurion indicated an American influence that he suspected would appeal to American Zionists, since the former term carried the echoes of Woodrow Wilson's idealistic rhetoric in support of Zionism.¹⁰

The Biltmore Conference was significant for two reasons: it marked a new beginning in Ben-Gurion's planned radicalization of the American Zionist movement, and it underscored the fact that Ben-Gurion was taking the helm of the Zionist movement. The Biltmore Declaration's obligatory expressions of solidarity with Weizmann were largely drawn from Weizmann's address to the conference, while almost all of the substantive points laying out the new policy came from Ben-Gurion. This would henceforth be the balance of power within the Zionist movement — Weizmann would hold his place as a spiritual or titular leader, and practical leadership would increasingly become Ben-Gurion's. Still, after the conference, many American Jews possessed less than Ben-Gurion's enthusiasm for either a commonwealth or state; what the Biltmore Conference did was make it increasingly difficult for Jews in America to advocate anti-Zionism or to remain apart from the

need to realize a Jewish territorial haven in Palestine. Events in Europe catalyzed the movement of skeptical or lukewarm Zionist sympathizers to those more emphatic for the need for the Jewish state in Palestine.

When viewed through a lens of innovation, the Biltmore program did not represent any new ideas. As Weizmann said, the Biltmore program was "just a resolution like the hundred and one resolutions usually passed at great meetings."¹¹ Weizmann had good reason to dismiss the importance of Biltmore: the conference represented the ultimate undermining of his authority and cemented Ben-Gurion's American strategy. This strategy ultimately had a big pay-off for the Zionists immediately after the end of WWII.

-Ken Stein, February 2011

Come, let us take the measure of Zionism's capacity to achieve its purpose. This universal war, in which the whole human race is plunged, puts all peoples and civilizations, all political institutions and purposes, to a merciless test of survival. Our own people were brutally singled out by the Nazis for extermination, but we believe that we will emerge victorious and, as a people, survive. Zionism will then face its hardest test: that of fulfillment.

¹⁰ Gal, Allon. *David Ben-Gurion and the American Alignment for a Jewish State*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington (1985), p.169.

¹¹ Brown, Michael. *The Israeli-American Connection: Its roots in the Yishuv, 1914-1945*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit (1996), p.237.

In two vital aspects its position then will be quite different from what it was after the last war. The situation of both Jewish people and Jewish territory has changed. After the last war, England and America, with France and Italy – other free democracies of the time- resolved to undo the historic wrong to our people and recognize its right to be restored to its homeland. The plight of the Jews, even in countries where they had suffered most, was not yet as hopeless as it will be now, and it seemed that our task of rebuilding Palestine to absorb new settlers could proceed at a leisurely pace.

This time we will find quite a different state of things. The size and urgency of Jewish migration will be unparalleled. The old debate, whether Zionism is spiritual or political, is dead. Either Zionism provides a radical and speedy satisfaction of the consuming need of thousands of uprooted Jews and, through mass immigration and settlement, lays the sure foundations of a free, self-governing, Jewish Palestine, or it is meaningless.

In the last war Palestine did not exist as a political unit nor did Syria or Iraq. All three, as well as most of Arabia, were parts of the Ottoman Empire. Under Turkish rule for 400 years, Palestine had still no Turkish population or Turkish culture. It was a country to all intents and purposes unclaimed, except by the Jewish people, which never, for all this stretch of centuries, ceased to regard it as the Land of Israel.

Meanwhile, some of the neighboring territories became independent Arab kingdoms and Palestine is now claimed as part of an Arab empire. The post-war settlement will have to include a decision about Palestine one way or the other.

Since the last war, Palestine has taken in more Jewish refugees than any other country, and in certain periods, when artificial limitations were relaxed, more than all other countries together. But in view of the magnitude of the coming refugee problem, the question is legitimately asked: How many more Jews can settle in Palestine on a sound economic basis?

No one can profess to give a clear-cut answer. Science has not yet discovered a sure method for predicting how many people can be settled on a given area anywhere. All this speculation about absorptive capacity is a peculiarly Zionist, or perhaps an anti-Zionist, invention. Absorptive capacity is no fixed and static measurement, but a fluctuating, dynamic quantum, which depends as much on human factors as on nature and area, if not more. No human factor is more decisive than need, and our desperate need creates immense absorptive capacity. They are our creativity, enterprise and halutzith, and the deep love and devotion we bear our Homeland. Paramount, however, is the regime: the political, legal and administrative conditions under which we shall enter and colonize.

The potentiality of agricultural development is certainly determined largely by the size of the country and the amount of land available for additional settlers. But even land is not a rigid datum, for although its length and breadth cannot be made more, it also has a third dimension-fertility or productivity-which can, as Palestine has shown.

At the London Conference in 1939, the Arab delegation made public a statement that, in the whole of western Palestine, there are only seven million dunams of cultivable land. The whole area is twenty-six and a half million dunams, so that, according to the Arabs, some nineteen million dunams are uncultivable and are certainly not cultivated by them. Practice has shown that what is uncultivated, and considered uncultivable, by the Arabs is cultivable and has been cultivated by Jews. In fact a large part of the area settled by Jews, is land up to now considered uncultivable: the sands of Rishon, the swamps of Hedera, the rocks of Motza, the stony hills of Hanita. The most striking example is the Huleh Basin, the largest malarial zone in Palestine: classified not only by the Arabs but also by the government as uncultivable, it is now

being turned by our Halutzim into the most prosperous and productive area of the country.

Jews had not merely to acquire land, but to reclaim, drain, reforest, fertilize, and irrigate it. In this way, and by the introduction of modern and intensive methods of cultivation, modern machinery, new breeds of cattle and poultry, new plants and seeds, rotation of crops, and by utilizing surface and sub-soil water to the best advantage, they made new acres available for settlement. And they so increased their yield that they were able steadily to raise the standard of living, while gradually reducing the subsistence area from the 250 dunams per family necessary in the earlier stages of colonization to 100 dunams in unirrigated plain land, 50 dunams in the mountains where fruit trees were planted, and 20-25 dunams under irrigation.

In purely Arab districts, the Arab population remained almost stationary, in areas of Jewish settlement it greatly increased, and there the economic standard of the Arabs was raised and they made use of the improved methods of their Jewish neighbors.

For the purpose of agricultural settlement western Palestine can conveniently be divided into four areas: the plains, comprising 4,602,900 dunams; the hill country, 8,088,000 dunams; the Negev (southern Palestine), 12,577,000 dunams; the wilderness of Judea, 1,050,900 dunams.

In the plains some 3,500,000 dunams are irrigable; at present only 350,000 are irrigated. One irrigated dunam yields at least as much as ten unirrigated. Each million of the three million dunams, when fully irrigated, makes room for from twenty-five to thirty thousand new settlers, leaving enough still for the former occupants, whether Jews or Arabs.

In the hill country some 4,500,000 dunams are at present uncultivated, and officially considered uncultivable. So far Jews have acquired some 350,000 dunams and, the Government notwithstanding, established flourishing villages in the hills of Jerusalem, Samaria and Galilee. At least another 2,500,000 dunams of so-called waste hill-country can be brought under Jewish cultivation, making room for another 50,000 families.

With regard to the Negev, Hope Simpson reported thus: 'Given the possibility of irrigation there is practically an inexhaustible supply of cultivable land in the Beersheba area...Up to the present time there has been no organized attempt to ascertain whether there is or is not an artesian supply of water.' The Peel Royal Commission in 1937 pointed out that 'since the date of this report, it appears that very little has been done by Government to discover water in Palestine.' But it has been discovered by Jews in many parts where it had not been believed to exist, and it is the view of our experts that water for the Negev can be made available either by boring artesian wells, or building dams, or bringing water from the rivers of the north. Given the necessary authority and means to provide the water, it will be possible for hundreds of thousands of new immigrants to settle on the land in the Negev alone, which, making up half of western Palestine, is unoccupied at present except for a few roving Beduin.

Our experience is that for each family settled in agriculture at least another three families can be settled in industry, trade and the liberal professions.

Though deficient in certain important raw materials, Palestine has the advantage of favorable geography as the bridge between the three continents of the Old World. It has easy access to the sea in two directions: through the Mediterranean and the Red Sea; it has the infinite mineral riches of the Dead Sea and its own electric power. It has an extensive hinterland, the whole of the Near and Middle East as far as India, as a market for its wares. And with their proved ability to develop industry in many countries, there is no reason why Jews should not make Palestine the industrial center of the Middle East.

The Peel Commission stated: 'Twelve years ago the National Home was an experiment, today it is a going concern. The number of inhabitants has increased fourfold...The process of

agricultural colonization has steadily continued...yet more impressive has been the urban development. Tel Aviv, still a wholly Jewish town, has leaped to the first place among the towns of Palestine. Its population now probably exceeds 150,000...rising so quickly from a barren strip of sand it is quite startling...There is the same effect at Jerusalem. The population of Jerusalem has grown to 125,000 and of that some 75,000 are Jews. The growth of Haifa, too, which now has a population of over 100,000, is only less remarkable than that of Tel Aviv...about on-half of its inhabitants are now Jews and much of the business of its port is Jewish business....Broadly speaking, the remarkable urban development in Palestine has been Jewish. The relation between rural and urban areas, between industrialists and agriculturalists, has remained fairly constant from the start... From 1918 to the present day over £14 million has been invested in Palestine through 'national funds' and roughly £63 million by private industrialists. The total investment therefore amounts to £77 million and of this at least on-fifth has been contributed by the Jews in the United States. Lastly the amount of Jewish deposits in Palestine banks reaches £16 ½ million. These...figures...bear witness to quite an extraordinary measure of economic expansion.'

Since then there has been further expansion. New industries have been started, textile, chemical, wood, metal, electrical, food, building and clothing, which supply the home market and the Near and Middle East. In 1941 alone over 200 new Jewish industrial undertakings were established.

The youngest Jewish adventure in Palestine is the sea. Jews as a seafaring people may seem fantastic to those who know them only in Europe and America. Forty years ago the idea of their becoming farmers also seemed fantastic. But it happened. Six years ago there was not a single Jewish sailor on the seas of Palestine, although the main sea trade and transport were Jewish. On May 15, 1936, the High Commissioner personally telephoned the Jewish Agency to announce that he recognized the justice of our claim, since the Mufti had closed the port of Jaffa to be allowed to unload in Tel Aviv. And, literally almost overnight, the beginnings of a Jewish port took shape. Thousands of Jews became marine workers in Haifa and Tel Aviv. And Jewish ships manned by Jewish skippers and seamen crossed the seas.

It was a Hebrew-speaking tribe that gave the world seaborne trade and navigation: the people of Tyre and Sidon, who founded the great empire of Carthage. Jewish privateers fought the Romans in a bloody sea-battle of Jaffa before the fall of Jerusalem. The people of Tyre and Sidon perished, but the scions of the privateers are very much alive. Many of them are back in Palestine and more are to come. They went back to the land. They are going back to the sea as well. There is no reason why the Italians should keep their monopoly of passengers and cargoes on the Mediterranean. Palestine merchandise and passengers to Palestine can be carried in Jewish ships. Palestine is a small country, but its two seas, the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, are big. Jewish sailors and fishermen will call the seas to Palestine and our people take its place among the sea-faring nations.

* * *

I come now to the political aspect: and, first, the Arab problem.

In few of the complicated problems of Zionism is there so much confusion and misunderstanding as in this. The first thing to make clear is that there is no Arab problem in the sense that there is a Jewish one. There is no homeless Arab people; no Arab migration. Just the contrary. The Arabs are among the rare races which are almost entirely, with insignificant

exceptions, concentrated in their own territories. They are in possession of vast lands, and if they suffer at all it is from a paucity, rather than a surplus, of population.

In a paper prepared in 1926 for the Royal Central Asian Society, Ja'far Pasha al Askari, then Prime Minister of Iraq, said: 'The size of the country is 140 thousand square miles, about three times that of England and Wales, while the population is only three million...What Iraq wants above everything else is more population.'

The same applies to Syria. All Syrian economists are agreed that the small numbers and inadequate means of the present population prevent the development of the country's productive assets to the full. Transjordan, almost four times as large as western Palestine, has only one-fifth of its population. This under-population constitutes not only an economic impediment, but a grave political danger as the case of Alexandretta proves.

A second point must be made clear: the immigration and settlement of Jews in Palestine have not been at Arab expense. In industrial and maritime development, this is self-evident as there is practically no Arab industry and the sea is entirely vacant. But even in agriculture, either we occupied so-called uncultivable land, or, in the case of cultivated land, so heightened the yield that the same area not merely provides for additional settlers, but makes it possible for the old ones to enjoy a higher standard of living. Mass immigration and colonization on the largest possible scale, such as we must expect after this war, can be effected without the slightest need to displace the present population.

In some quarters the idea of transfer is advanced as the perfect solving of the problem. Let us understand once and for all that to enable Palestine to absorb all the Jews who may be expected to want a new home in the post-war period, there is no economic necessity for any transfer whatsoever. In post-war Europe, resettlement of populations may become urgent, even inevitable. In the period between the last war and this, we saw a remarkable transfer of population between Greece and Turkey, from Asia Minor to Europe. Syria and Iraq may also have an interest economically as well as politically, in strengthening their position vis-à-vis their Turkish and Persian neighbors by transferring new Arab settlers to their country, and the only source of such settlers is Palestine. But this is a purely internal Arab problem, in which we may help if asked by the Arabs, but neither can nor ought take any initiative. It is not a prerequisite of large-scale Jewish settlement; and it is necessary and wise that we should base our future plans for the rebuilding of Palestine on the assumption that we have to reckon with the presence of something like a million Arabs, their rights and claims.

There is no conflict of economic interests between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, none between present population and new arrivals. The very fact that the Mufti and his friends, and the Chamberlain-MacDonald Government which tried to appease them, insisted on abolishing the principle of economic absorptive capacity as the only yardstick of Jewish immigration implies that the Arabs as well as the authors of the White Paper realized that on purely economic grounds there is room for a very large influx, which may turn Palestine into a Jewish country.

The Arab problem really means political opposition by the Arabs to Jewish immigration. Many people, ignoring this simple but unpleasant truth, try to solve the problem where it does not exist. One solution offered is a bi-national State. If this means simply that all the inhabitants of Palestine, Jews and Arabs alike, must enjoy complete equality of rights not merely as individuals but also as national entities, which means the right freely to develop their language, culture, religion and so forth, then certainly no Jew, much less a Zionists, will hesitate to support it. But I am not altogether convinced that the Arabs will agree to that equality, if they have the power to determine the constitution. When the Mufti was asked by the Royal Commission on

January 12, 1937, how the Arabs would treat the Jews already in the country, if they had control of it, he said: 'That will be left to the discretion of the Government which will be set up under the treaty and will be decided by that Government on the considerations most equitable and most beneficial to the country.'

When asked whether the country could assimilate and digest the 400,000 Jews then in it, he replied: 'No.'

The chairman then remarked: 'Some of them would have to be removed by a process kindly or painful as the case may be?'

The Mufti answered: 'We must leave all this to the future.'

Thus far no other Arab leader has publicly differed from him. We must also remember the bitter experience of the Assyrians in Iraq, to whom protection was guaranteed under the Anglo-Iraq treaty as well as by the League of Nations. The Anglo-Iraq treaty is still in existence and so, at the critical time, was the League of Nations. But the Assyrians were massacred.

Others offer parity as a solution, or interpret a bi-national State to mean parity, so that, irrespective of their numerical strength Jews and Arabs should, in all main departments of Government, legislative and executive, be represented on a fifty-fifty basis. I was one of those who strongly advocated parity under the British Mandate. But I doubt whether a regime of parity without a Mandatory is practicable, or whether a self-governing State can carry on at all under what may mean a permanent deadlock. Again, no Arab leader has been found to agree to the principle, with or without the Mandate.

But assuming that parity in a bi-national State is workable, assuming that not only Jews but Arabs also will agree to it, it does not in the least solve the only problem that matters: Jewish immigration. The example of Switzerland, where the divergence of several nationalities was satisfactorily resolved, is not applicable to Palestine, because the crucial issue, the root of all friction, is not so much the problem of Jews and Arabs already in Palestine, but almost exclusively, the problem of further Jewish arrivals.

Should there be Jewish immigration or should there not? That is the question. No solution, real or illusory, for all the other problems of Palestine, actual or imaginary, means anything, if it does not give a clear and simple answer to this simple but vital question.

Can the Arabs be expected to agree to Jewish immigration and under what conditions? There is no deception worse than self-deception. We must face facts: if it depends on Arab consent, there will hardly be any Jewish immigration at all. It is critically important, politically as well as morally, that our position be unequivocal. Jewish immigration to Palestine needs no consent. We are returning as of right. History, international law and the irresistible life-need of a people nothing can destroy, these have ordained Palestine as the rightful home of the Jewish people.

A Jew is no stranger, no intruder, no immigrant in Palestine. He is at home. History and the links of history, an attachment unbroken for thousands of years in spite of all vicissitudes, in spite of expulsion on expulsion, have made Palestine our inalienable Homeland. It is an historical fact that there are a million Arabs in Palestine, who legitimately regard themselves as its children, whether we like it or not. So is it an historical fact, disagreeable as it may be to the Arabs, that Palestine for more than 3,000 years was and has stayed Eretz Israel for us. And so international law solemnly confirmed, for the Mandate explicitly pronounced a recognition of the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine and of grounds for reconstituting in it their National Home. But there is something stronger even than international law, and that is the living, desperate want of a folk for which return to Palestine is the only way of salvation and

survival.

No political opposition or obstruction by Arabs, no terrorist intimidation, no restrictions of a White Paper that morally and legally is invalid, will prevent Jews from getting back to the Land of Israel. For any who still doubt it, the story of the *Patria*, the *Struma*, and their many sister-ships should be final proof. Their plain meaning was: Palestine or death. As soon as this war is over, hundreds like them will sail to Palestine.

Ours is a realistic generation. After the many disappointments of the last war and peace, men fear idealistic illusions and want to be sober and practical. And he must be a visionary, a dreamer, who cannot see how grim and bitter will be the reality of Jewish migration after this war, of Jewish urge for Palestine. No other reality of Palestine can be as vehement and impelling as that unstoppable Jewish tide setting toward Palestine where are the deepest biological and psychological origins of our very existence.

The Arabs will acquiesce in Jewish immigration and adjust themselves to the new reality when it becomes an established fact. You will recall that, after the last war, the Arab representatives at the Peace conference agreed with and accepted the decision of the Powers to fulfill the 'Jewish Palestine' part of their scheme for the future of the Arab countries. Feisal (later King Feisal), son and representative of that King Hussein with whom England negotiated, during the war, signed an agreement with Dr. Weizmann on January 3, 1919, wherein the following is laid down:

'In the establishment of the constitution and administration of Palestine all such measures shall be adopted as will afford the fullest guarantees for carrying into effect the British Government's Declaration of the 2nd of November, 1917.

'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.'

In a letter written on March 3, 1919, to Felix Frankfurter on behalf of the Hejaz Delegation, Feisal said this:

'We Arabs, especially the educated among us, look with the deepest sympathy on the Zionist movement. Our deputation here in Paris is fully acquainted with the proposals submitted yesterday by the Zionist Organization to the Peace Conference, and we regard them as moderate and proper. We will do our best, in so far as we are concerned, to help them through; we will wish the Jews a hearty welcome home...The Jewish movement is national and not imperialist. Our movement is national and not imperialist, and there is room in Syria* for both. Indeed I think that neither can be a real success without the other.'

There was also a delegation of Syrian Arabs, representing all communities: Moslems, Christians, Jews; one member was Jamil Mardam, later Prime Minister of Syria. In the concluding part of his statement before the Supreme Council of Allies, on February 13, 1919, M. Checkri Ganem, chief representative of the Central Syrian Committee, said:

'May we say one word as regards Palestine, although the subject is said to be a thorny one. Palestine is incontestably the southern portion of our country. The Zionist claim it. We have suffered too much from sufferings resembling theirs, not to throw open wide to them the doors of Palestine. All those among them who are oppressed in certain retrograde countries are welcome. Let them settle in Palestine, but in an autonomous Palestine, connected with Syria by the sole bond of federation. Will not a Palestine enjoying wide internal autonomy be for them a sufficient guarantee?'

* Syria is here meant to include Palestine.

It is then on historical record that, when the decision was taken, there was no Arab opposition. Indeed, there was explicit Arab consent. When and why this opposition then? When implementation of the decision was handed over to agents who cared little for its success: the Mandatory Administration of colonial traditions and staff had neither the understanding, the vision and sympathy, nor the ability to carry out what is admittedly a complex and difficult task of ingathering and resettlement. And because some of the Arab leaders in Palestine were not slow to perceive the tardiness -to put it mildly- rather reluctant mode of implementation. Naturally they took immediate advantage of this hesitancy and half-heartedness, believing that, after all, the decision was perhaps not very seriously meant and could be easily reversed.

It is the Royal Commission itself which condemned the instrument designed to fulfill the international pledge and coined the phrase 'the unworkability of the Mandate.' Whether we agree with all the reasoning of the Commission or not, one thing can hardly be disputed: the system set up to work the Mandate did prove to be unworkable.

Though we have had, and still have, frequent differences with the Mandatory, some of them very bitter, some even tragic, especially since the policy of the White Paper began, and culminating in the controversy over a Jewish army in Palestine and the Struma, we cannot say that the Administration's failure to carry out the Mandate for the last twenty years is due to the fact that it is British.

The unworkability was inherent in a unique situation: the incongruity between the nature of the task and of the instrument. The Administration was composed of an officialdom trained to administer backward peoples, used to dealing with primitive tribes, where its main duty was to preserve the existing order as far as possible.

In Palestine it encountered an advanced and progressive Jewish community, and a dynamic situation requiring constant initiative, unrelenting effort and creative energy. It was only human nature that the officials should feel themselves much more at ease dealing with Arabs and administering to their needs, where they could indulge their ingrained habit of maintaining the status quo.

Mass colonization on a large scale will be necessary to meet post-war needs of Jewish migration, and require a large outlay of capital from inter-governmental sources. The principal and indispensable readjustment for a task of such magnitude, however, is a new regime-political, legal and administrative, especially designed for the maximum development of the resources of Palestine and the absorption of the maximum number of immigrants in the shortest possible time. The fundamental laws of the country, land and water regulations, labor legislation, fiscal and commercial statutes, must be entirely altered to match intensive settlement, the speedy building up of industries, the growth of town and village. And not only the laws, but their daily administration, must be guided and inspired by this steadfast and unwavering purpose. Only a Jewish Administration can be equal to it, one completely identified with the needs and aims of Jewish settlers and whole-heartedly devoted to the upbuilding of the country. Jewish immigration in great volume is bound to result, in the not distant future, in a growing Jewish majority and the establishment of a self-governing Jewish Commonwealth.

Reviewing the events of the past score of years, taking into account our requirements in the period following immediately after this war, our first conclusion is that the Mandate must be entrusted to the Jewish people and no other.

I do not mean the formal Mandate as of 1922. The whole system of Mandates may go. I mean the responsibility and necessary governmental authority to rebuild the country and secure the restoration of the Jews to it. To start with, immigration and colonization should be made the

charge of an agency of the whole Jewish people.

It is too soon to plan in detail for the constitution of Palestine after the war and attempt 'crystal-gazing' now. It is, however, possible and expedient to lay down the most essential principles for our own guidance and for the instant political job of Zionism, to educate Jewish and generally public opinion toward a Zionist solution of the Jewish and the Palestine problem.

These principles are three:

1. An unequivocal reaffirmation of the original intention of the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate to reestablish Palestine as a Jewish Commonwealth, as was made clear by the President of the United States on March 3, 1919.
2. The Jewish Agency for Palestine, as the trustee for prospective immigrants and settlers, should have full control over Jewish immigration and be vested with all due authority for development and upbuilding, not least of unoccupied and uncultivated lands.
3. Complete equality, civil, political and religious, of all inhabitants of Palestine; self-government in all municipal affairs; autonomy for the different Jewish and Arab communities in the management of all their internal affairs, educational, religious and so forth.

Whether Palestine should remain a separate unit or be associated with a larger and more comprehensive political entity – a Near Eastern Federation, the British Commonwealth of Nations, an Anglo-American Union or the like, will depend on circumstances and developments we can neither determine nor predict and does not constitute a special Jewish or Palestinian problem. We will be part of the new world and of the new pattern which, we believe, will come out of this war, with victory on our side. But whatever proves to be the constitutional relation of Jewish Palestine to other countries, there must be a continued willingness and readiness to cooperate closely with the Arabs in Palestine as well as in neighboring countries. Once the bone of contention of Jewish immigration is removed by a clear-cut international decision on the one hand, and on the other, by assurance that the Jews are to control their own immigration, there is no serious reason to abandon hope of Jews and Arabs working together.

Zionism in action means building nation and State. Many have conceded the justice and beauty of the Zionist ideal and the Jewish people's right to a free existence of its own, as an equal of all other nations. But they found it hard seriously to believe that Jews, who for centuries had become more and more denationalized, uprooted from their native heath, set apart in cities, and confined to a very few occupations and trades, who had forgotten their national language and loosened their national ties, who remained Jews largely because they could not become something else—that these could again become a nation, rebuild a country and recreate an independent economy and culture.

There was, indeed, much more in this viewpoint than they knew who advanced it. The idea and vision looked simple, natural and necessary, but translated into action they were at once involved in countless obstacles and almost insurmountable difficulties. They meant not merely the transfer of a people, but its total transformation, not merely the return to a country, but its upbuilding. And what a people. And what a country! The Jews had to remake themselves and remake Palestine. We must remember the Zionist colonization is possibly the only example, or certainly one of the very few examples, of successful colonization not undertaken and not supported by a State.

We are still very far from our goal, the most difficult test of fulfillment is still before us. But past performance gives us confidence that it can be done, and that we can do it.

Defying economic dogma, Jews in Palestine went from town to country; urbanized for centuries, they became husbandmen. Over 30% of them live in rural settlements. Even more remarkable is their reversion to manual work. Of 500,000 souls, 125,000 adults are members of the Labor Federation. As nowhere else, they are active in every kind of work: in fields, factories and quarries, in mines on buildings, roads and railways, in harbors, fishing and aviation.

Coming from all ends of the earth with diverse languages and cultural traditions, they are being welded into a new uniformity, Hebrew their common language, the rebuilding of Zion their common purpose.

Living in their own villages and towns, providing for their own defense, education and social services, they have developed a comprehensive system of local and national self-government rising firmly from an independent economy and culture, and thus, for all practical purposes, have laid the foundations of a Jewish Commonwealth.

What 500,000 Jews could do, six, eight or ten times their number can. What was done on an area of one and a half million dunams can be done on six, eight or ten times as much. There is no truer, more abiding and convincing test of fulfillment. Zionism has stood that test, and not once only.

A test of nationhood faced the Yishuv four years before the outbreak of this war, when the Mufti, on instructions of Mussolini and Hitler, tried to destroy it by starvation, interrupting its communications, stopping its work and the arrival of newcomers by terror, by indiscriminate murder. Never before did the economic self-sufficiency and strength of the Yishuv, its great valor, its deep attachment to its ancient soil, its creative energy manifest itself more strongly. Not only was there no retreat or abandonment of the least position, but there were continuous and manifold development and expansion in agricultural settlements, absorption of new immigration, industrial advances and conquest of the sea, and the creation of a defense force such as Palestine had not seen since the seventh century, when Benjamin of Tiberias led a contingent of his fellow-Jews to help the Persians fight the tyrants of Byzantium.

The outbreak of this war brought a sterner test. I can best tell you how the Yishuv fares by quoting a recent message from Moshe Shertok, who now conducts our political front in Palestine:

‘Amid this sea of pain and horror, Palestine today stands out as a rock of refuge, a beacon of hope to an agonized Jewry. Steeled in adversity in the four pre-war years, the Yishuv is now called upon to act in this war as vanguard of the entire Jewish people, shouldering on its behalf three major responsibilities. The first and the foremost is fullest cooperation in the defense of the country and in the Middle Eastern campaign by mobilizing all available resources for a distinctive Jewish war effort, in the military, industrial and agricultural spheres.

‘The second is the utmost exertion to save Jewish victims of the war.

‘The third is preparation and bold efforts for post-war construction.’

‘Here are the landmarks of our progress:

‘In the military services 12,500 men and women* are enlisted.

‘Thousands of Jewish technicians and skilled artisans are engaged in essential war work in Palestine and in the Middle East. Jewish industry employs 35,000 workers, who are increasingly harnessed to war production. Its output for war has increased eightfold since 1940. Many plants are working day and night.

* By the end of the war, the number had reached 33,000.

‘The Jewish National Fund has acquired 133,000 dunams of land during the war period. Eighteen settlements were founded, breaking new ground for agricultural production and increasing space in the old and new settlements, whose manpower and resources are strained to the highest pitch. Despite the veering fortunes of war, tens of thousands of refugees have entered Palestine since September of 1939. The Yishuv is bracing itself for a fresh, a supreme, effort in defense and production. Thousands of youngsters from the towns are on their way to work on the farms. Large numbers are being trained for defense duties. New contingents of recruits are being raised for the army.’

* * *

In our rebuilding of Palestine we could not altogether escape the conflicts, contradictions and evils of the present economic system. But it is not vainly that we fought for all the centuries to maintain our identity and over Jewishness, molded in the Homeland whence our Prophets bequeathed to humanity the still unrealized vision of human brotherhood and justice, love of neighbor, peace among nations. Without bloodshed, without coercion, by a voluntary moral effort, assisted by the goodwill and sympathetic help of the whole Zionist Movement, our Halutzim set up a new type of communal and cooperative settlement-kibbutz and moshav- embodying an original human kinship of free creative work, mutual help, common interests and complete equality, and combining an ideal social structure with a sound economic foundation, so far not elsewhere known. And it has stood the test of time- the first kvutza was set up in 1910- and proved its economic and social superiority to other types. It is a message of living faith for all Jews, and for the world at large, that a better society is not just a myth.

This is the Second World War in our generation. Never before was all humanity threatened with such danger of complete and total slavery. Never before were our own people threatened with such complete and total annihilation. While the war goes on we must devote every ounce of our energy to complete and total victory. But we must beware of the perilous fallacy that the smashing of Hitlerism alone will free the world of all its ills and the Jewish people of its misery. There is something fundamentally wrong in civilization, if a Hitler can bring the whole of mankind to such a pass, and something fundamentally wrong in the Jewish set-up if, whenever there is any trouble, Jews are singled out as its first and most catastrophic victims. Victory over Hitler will not be an end, but the beginning of a new set-up for the world and for ourselves.

Our past work and achievements in Palestine have a double contribution to make to the reshaping of human society and the remaking of Jewish history. They will serve as the pedestal upon which to build the Jewish Commonwealth, and a Jewish Commonwealth means a Commonwealth of Justice. To build it will need maximal effort by the entire Jewish people, in the Diaspora and in Palestine. As part of the great human cause, America, England, Russia and other nations that champion humanity, may be expected to help us. But we must do the job ourselves. Palestine will be as Jewish as the Jews will make it.