

**Remarks by Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko to the UN Special Committee on Palestine
(14 May 1947)**

(Documents A/307 and A/307/Corr. 1) - <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/D41260F1132AD6BE052566190059E5F0>

Mr. GROMYKO (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (*translated from Russian*):
The course of the discussion, both in the plenary meetings of the General Assembly and in the First Committee, has shown that the Palestine question has become an acute political problem. Apparently, this opinion is shared by all the delegations which took part in the discussion. This conclusion is supported by the very fact that this question is being discussed by the United Nations.

However, the fact that the Palestine question has become a subject of discussion in the General Assembly not only shows that the question is acute, but also imposes upon the United Nations the responsibility for its solution. This fact obliges us to study the question carefully from every angle; and we should be guided by the purposes and principles of our Organization and by the interests of the maintenance of peace and international security.

The course of the discussion has also shown that at this special session of the Assembly it is apparently difficult to take any definite and, still more, any final decision on the substance of the problem. Thus, the discussion at this session can be considered only as the initial stage of the consideration of the Palestine problem. In the opinion of all the delegations, the General Assembly will have to take a decision on the substance of this question at its next regular session at the end of 1947.

Nevertheless, the discussion has shown that the delegations of a number of States considered it useful to exchange views on certain important aspects of the Palestine question at this session. The discussion, even though incomplete, of certain important aspects of this question has been useful. In the first place, it has enabled delegations to gain a better knowledge of the facts relating to the Palestine question and, in particular, to the situation which has developed in that country at the present time. In the second place, such a discussion, although it is of a preliminary

nature, lightens the task of defining the functions and direction of the work of the committee which we are about to establish for the purpose of preparing proposals on the substance of the question for the regular session of the General Assembly.

In discussing the Palestine question, even in a preliminary fashion, and in discussing the tasks and functions of the afore-mentioned committee, we cannot fail to note, first of all, the important fact that the mandatory system of administration of Palestine, established in 1922, has not justified itself. It has not passed the test. It is hardly possible to contest the accuracy of this conclusion. It is an indisputable fact that the aims laid down at the time of the establishment of the mandate have not been achieved. The solemn declarations which accompanied the establishment of the mandatory system of administration of Palestine have remained declarations and have not been transformed into facts.

The conclusion that the mandatory system of administration of Palestine has not justified itself is confirmed by the whole history of the administration of Palestine on the basis of this system, not to mention the confirmation of this conclusion by the situation which has developed in that country at the present time. In this connection, it may be recalled that in 1937 the British Peel Commission, after studying the Palestine situation, declared that it was impossible to carry out the mandate. Such a conclusion was also reached by the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations, which also pointed out the "impossibility" of implementing the Palestine mandate. The committee we are about to set up should ascertain the historical facts relating to this question.

Many other facts relating to the history of the mandatory administration of Palestine could be adduced to confirm the bankruptcy of this system of administration. It is hardly necessary, however, to enumerate these facts in detail. In this connection, for instance, it is enough to mention the Arab uprising which took place in 1936 and continued for several years. There are also enough facts relating to the situation existing in Palestine at the present time to confirm the aforementioned conclusion. We all know of the sanguinary events taking place in Palestine. Such events are becoming more and more frequent.

For this reason, these events are attracting increasing attention from the peoples of the world and, above all, from the United Nations. This question is being

considered by the General Assembly as a direct result of the bankruptcy of the mandatory system of administration of Palestine, which has led to an extreme aggravation of the situation and to sanguinary events in that country. The very fact that the United Kingdom Government itself submitted this question for the consideration of the General Assembly is extremely indicative. This fact can only be considered as an admission that it is impossible for the existing situation in Palestine to continue. The special committee should make a careful study of the situation at present prevailing in Palestine.

It is well known that representatives of the United Kingdom Government have stated, at various times, even before the question was submitted to the General Assembly, that the mandatory system of administration of Palestine has not justified itself and that the solution of the problem of how to deal with Palestine should be found by the United Nations. Thus, for instance, Mr. Bevin made the following statement in the House of Commons on 18 February 1947:

"We intend to place before them [the United Nations] a historical account of the way in which His Majesty's Government have discharged their trust in Palestine over the last twenty-five years. We shall explain that the mandate has proved to be unworkable in practice and that the obligations undertaken to the two communities in Palestine have been shown to be irreconcilable."

This statement by the British Foreign Minister directly and openly recognizes the real situation which has been brought about by the mandatory administration of Palestine. It is an admission that this administration did not solve the question of mutual relations between the Arabs and the Jews, which is one of the most important and acute questions, and that this administration has not ensured the achievement of the aims laid down when the mandate was established.

The existing form of government, as Mr. Bevin has affirmed, is acceptable neither to the Arab population nor to the Jewish population of Palestine. Both the Arabs and the Jews protest against it. It has never enjoyed, and does not enjoy the support of the peoples of Palestine; and without such support it can only lead to further difficulties and complexities in the situation. Concerning the attitude of the Arab and Jewish populations towards the mandatory system of administration of Palestine, the British Foreign Minister stated in his speech to the House of Commons on 26 February 1947 that the Palestine administration was faced with an

extremely difficult task, did not enjoy the support of the people and was subjected to criticism from both sides.

The committee we are about to set up cannot fail to take into account the conclusions reached by the United Kingdom Government itself concerning the results of the mandatory administration of Palestine.

It is well known that it is not only the United Kingdom Government which has reached this conclusion. For instance, the so-called Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine, which studied the question in 1946, came to a conclusion which was essentially the same. This Committee's report on the prevailing situation in Palestine contains the following passage:

"Palestine is an armed camp. We saw signs of this almost as soon as we crossed the frontier and we became more and more aware of the tense atmosphere each day. Many buildings have barbed wire and other defenses. We ourselves were closely guarded by armed police and were often escorted by armored cars ... throughout the country there are substantially built police barracks."1/

That is how the Anglo-American Committee described the position in Palestine. Its description of the situation is still another proof of the results of the mandatory administration of Palestine. That Palestine, as the Committee states, has become "an armed camp" is a fact which speaks for itself. In such circumstances, there can be no serious talk of defending the interests of the population of Palestine, of improving the material conditions of its existence, or of raising its cultural level.

The same Anglo-American Committee pointed out the following extremely interesting facts:

The total number of persons in full-time employment in the police and prison administration reached 15,000 in 1945. This figure is extremely indicative. It

explains to us how the considerable funds, which are a burden on the population, are expended. In other circumstances, these funds might be used in the interests of the economic and cultural development of the country and in the interests of its population. Here is another fact. In 1944-45, 18,400,000 U. S. dollars were spent on the maintenance of "law and order". In the same financial year, only 2,200,000 U. S. dollars were spent on health measures, and 2,800,000 U. S. dollars on education.

In citing these figures, the Anglo-American Committee came to the following noteworthy conclusion: "Thus, even from a budgetary point of view, Palestine has developed into a semi- military or police State."^{2/}

The above-mentioned facts from the report of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine, are of considerable interest in describing the situation prevailing in Palestine, and must lead us to consider seriously how the existing situation can be rectified and how a solution of the Palestine problem can be found in conformity with the interests of its peoples and also with the general interests of the United Nations. The task of the special committee should be to help the United Nations to achieve such a solution of the problem by studying the actual situation in Palestine on the spot.

Is it surprising, in view of the situation prevailing in Palestine, that both the Jews and the Arabs demand the termination of the mandate? They are fully agreed on this; there is no disagreement between them on this point. The United Nations must take this fact into account when it considers the question of Palestine's future.

In discussing the question of the task of the committee for the preparation of proposals on Palestine, we must take into account another important aspect of this question. As we know, the aspirations of a considerable part of the Jewish people are linked with the problem of Palestine and of its future administration. This fact scarcely requires proof. It is not surprising, therefore, that great attention was given to this aspect of the question, both in the General Assembly and at the meetings of the First Committee. Interest in this aspect is understandable and fully justified.

During the last war, the Jewish people underwent exceptional sorrow and suffering. Without any exaggeration, this sorrow and suffering are indescribable. It is difficult

to express them in dry statistics on the Jewish victims of the fascist aggressors. The Jews in territories where the Hitlerites held sway were subjected to almost complete physical annihilation. The total number of members of the Jewish population who perished at the hands of the Nazi executioners is estimated at approximately six million. Only about a million and a half Jews in Western Europe survived the war.

But these figures, although they give an idea of the number of victims of the fascist aggressors among the Jewish people, give no idea of the difficulties in which large numbers of Jewish people found themselves after the war.

Large numbers of the surviving Jews of Europe were deprived of their countries, their homes and their means of existence. Hundreds of thousands of Jews are wandering about in various countries of Europe in search of means of existence and in search of shelter. A large number of them are in camps for displaced persons and are still continuing to undergo great privations. To these privations our attention was drawn in particular by the representative of the Jewish Agency, whom we heard in the First Committee.

It may well be asked if the United Nations, in view of the difficult situation of hundreds of thousands of the surviving Jewish population, can fail to show an interest in the situation of these people, torn away from their countries and their homes. The United Nations cannot and must not regard this situation with indifference, since this would be incompatible with the high principles proclaimed in its Charter, which provide for the defence of human rights, irrespective of race, religion or sex. The time has come to help these people, not by word, but by deeds. It is essential to show concern for the urgent needs of a people which has undergone such great suffering as a result of the war brought about by Hitlerite Germany. This is a duty of the United Nations.

In view of the necessity of manifesting concern for the needs of the Jewish people who find themselves without homes and without means of existence, the delegation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics thinks it essential, in this connection, to draw the attention of the General Assembly to the following important circumstance. Past experience, particularly during the Second World War, shows that no western European State was able to provide adequate assistance for the Jewish people in defending its rights and its very existence from the violence of the Hitlerites and their allies. This is an unpleasant fact, but

unfortunately, like all other facts, it must be admitted.

The fact that no western European State has been able to ensure the defense of the elementary rights of the Jewish people, and to safeguard it against the violence of the fascist executioners, explains the aspirations of the Jews to establish their own State. It would be unjust not to take this into consideration and to deny the right of the Jewish people to realize this aspiration. It would be unjustifiable to deny this right to the Jewish people, particularly in view of all it has undergone during the Second World War. Consequently, the study of this aspect of the problem and the preparation of relevant proposals must constitute an important task of the special committee.

I shall now deal with a fundamental question in connection with the discussion of the tasks and powers of the committee we are about to set up, that is, the question of Palestine's future. It is well known that there are many different plans regarding the future of Palestine and regarding the decisions of the Jewish people in connection with the Palestine question. In particular, several proposals were drawn up in connection with this question by the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine, to which I have referred. Among the better-known plans on the question of the future administration of Palestine, I should like to mention the following:

1. The establishment of a single Arab-Jewish State, with equal rights for Arabs and Jews;
2. The partition of Palestine into two independent States, one Arab and one Jewish;
3. The establishment of an Arab State in Palestine, without due regard for the rights of the Jewish population.
4. The establishment of a Jewish State in Palestine, without due regard for the rights of the Arab population.

Each of these four basic plans has, in turn, different variants for regulating relations between the Arabs and the Jews and for settling certain other problems. I

shall not analyze all these plans in detail at the present time. The Soviet Union will explain its position on the various plans in greater detail when definite proposals are prepared and considered and, more particularly, when decisions are taken on the future of Palestine. For the time being, I shall confine myself to a few remarks on the substance of the proposed plans, from the point of view of defining the committee's tasks in that field.

In analyzing the various plans for the future of Palestine, it is essential, first of all, to bear in mind the specific aspects of this question. It is essential to bear in mind the indisputable fact that the population of Palestine consists of two peoples, the Arabs and the Jews. Both have historical roots in Palestine. Palestine has become the homeland of both these peoples, each of which plays an important part in the economy and the cultural life of the country.

Neither the historic past nor the conditions prevailing in Palestine at present can justify any unilateral solution of the Palestine problem, either in favor of establishing an independent Arab State, without consideration for the legitimate rights of the Jewish people, or in favour of the establishment of an independent Jewish State, while ignoring the legitimate rights of the Arab population. Neither of these extreme decisions would achieve an equitable solution of this complicated problem, especially since neither would ensure the settlement of relations between the Arabs and the Jews, which constitutes the most important task.

An equitable solution can be reached only if sufficient consideration is given to the legitimate interests of both these peoples. All this leads the Soviet delegation to the conclusion that the legitimate interests of both the Jewish and Arab populations of Palestine can be duly safeguarded only through the establishment of an independent, dual, democratic, homogeneous Arab-Jewish State. Such a State must be based on equality of rights for the Jewish and the Arab populations, which might lay foundations of co-operation between these two peoples to their mutual interest and advantage. It is well known that this plan for the solution of Palestine's future has its supporters in that country itself.

Contemporary history provides examples not only of the racial and religious discrimination which, unfortunately, still exists in certain countries. It also gives us examples of the peaceful collaboration of different nationalities within the framework of a single State, in the course of which collaboration each nationality has unlimited possibilities for contributing its labor and showing its talents within

the framework of a single State and in the common interests of all the people. Is it not obvious that it would be extremely useful, in reaching a decision on the Palestine problem, to take into consideration existing examples of such friendly co-existence and brotherly co-operation among various nationalities within a single State?

Thus, the solution of the Palestine problem by the establishment of a single Arab-Jewish State with equal rights for the Jews and the Arabs may be considered as one of the possibilities and one of the more noteworthy methods for the solution of this complicated problem. Such a solution of the problem of Palestine's future might be a sound foundation for the peaceful co-existence and co-operation of the Arab and Jewish populations of Palestine, in the interests of both these peoples and to the advantage of the entire Palestine population and of the peace and security of the Near East.

If this plan proved impossible to implement, in view of the deterioration in the relations between the Jews and the Arabs--and it will be very important to know the special committee's opinion on this question--then it would be necessary to consider the second plan which, like the first, has its supporters in Palestine, and which provides for the partition of Palestine into two independent autonomous States, one Jewish and one Arab. I repeat that such a solution of the Palestine problem would be justifiable only if relations between the Jewish and Arab populations of Palestine indeed proved to be so bad that it would be impossible to reconcile them and to ensure the peaceful co-existence of the Arabs and the Jews.

Of course, both these possible plans for the solution of the problem of Palestine's future must be studied by the committee. Its task must be a multilateral and careful discussion of the plans for the administration of Palestine, with a view to submitting, to the next regular session of the General Assembly, some well-considered and reasoned proposals, which would help the United Nations to reach a just solution of this problem in conformity with the interests of the peoples of Palestine, the interests of the United Nations and our common interest in the maintenance of peace and international security.

Such are the considerations which the Soviet delegation thought necessary to express at this initial stage of the consideration of the Palestine problem.